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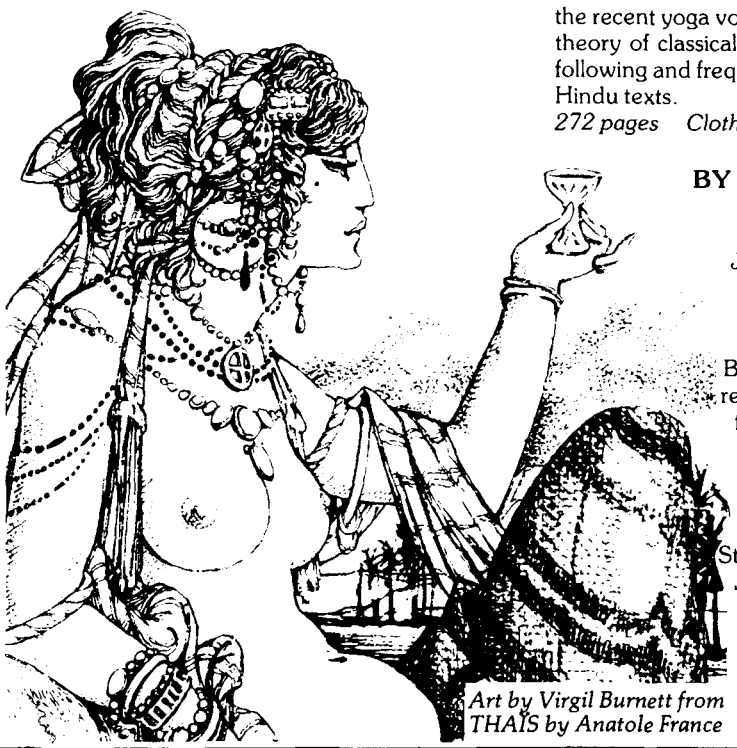

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Looking for America

ARISTIDES

I recently read with great interest that a writer named Dan Wakefield has written a book about American television soap opera. In this book, according to an interview with the author that ran in *Publishers Weekly,* Mr. Wakefield tells about his own addiction to the "soaps" and takes them very seriously indeed. He likens their audiences to those that once followed the serialized novels of Dickens, Trollope, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and Henry James. "People who watch today's soap operas are enjoying some of the best storytelling of our time," Mr. Wakefield says, and then adds, "It impressed me that the soaps included, and dealt with, people's lives as I think they are." Agnes Nixon, the writer of one soap, a show called "All My Children," Mr. Wakefield thinks to be the Charles Dickens of our day. Strenuous claims these.

Although I do not intend to test these claims either by watching the television soaps or by reading Mr. Wakefield's book on the subject, I was fascinated to learn that Mr. Wakefield had written such a book, for I remember him as a writer of very different interests. I remember him, specifically, as an *engagé* journalist, a man who wrote about life in Harlan County, Kentucky, about the lives of Puerto Ricans in New York, about the harsh days of drug addicts, about the turmoil over civil rights in the South. I remember him also as the author of a longish essay, in *Esquire,* about how John Dos Passos, in the cant phrase deriving from Stalinism, "sold out." Apparently Mr. Wakefield has come to think that other things are more important. To him the action in American life is now elsewhere, and in writing a book about American television soap opera he is in search of the way Americans live now—of no less than America itself. This is a large subject, the main subject, Topic Number One, and here comes Mr. Wakefield to say that the truth about it is to be found most any weekday afternoon at the turn of the on-off knob of one's television set.

What's going on, the way we live now, the search for our national character, the truth about America—all these various preoccupations might come under the rubric of the de Tocqueville Impulse. How strange—and strangely interesting—that the truest things written about us as a nation seem to have been written by foreigners. Along with Alexis de Tocqueville, the list of distinguished foreign interpreters of American life includes Lord Bryce, Johan Huizinga, and Gunnar Myrdal. More recently, Henry Fairlie, the British writer, has made an estimable contribution with his book *The Spoiled Child of the Western World: The Miscarriage of the American Idea in Our Time.* But de Tocqueville, in *Democracy in America* (published in 1835), surpasses all subsequent efforts, and his work will probably remain unsurpassed. For writers on American subjects, nearly any American subject, *Democracy in America* is a one-man's Bartlett's *Familiar Quotations.* In the sociology or reportage of our day, a quote from de Tocqueville has come to carry something of the authority of Scripture in an earlier day. If one writes about America in any of its aspects, sooner or later one bumps into his monument of a work. Apart from the extraordinary powers of observation and subtlety of formulation that went into *Democracy in America,* the book has about it an uncanny comprehensiveness. Everything of importance about our nation seems to be there; anything that is not there does not seem important. True, in de Tocqueville's book some things have gone by the board, done in by time; notable among

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the casualties history has inflicted are his chapters on women in America. Yet *Democracy in America* remains the discursive equivalent of the Great American Novel, the *Moby Dick* of our sociological literature, except that in it the hero (de Tocqueville) successfully lands the whale (America itself).

Harrison Salisbury, the Pulitzer Prize–winning journalist and latest of a long list of sufferers from the de Tocqueville Impulse, has recently returned from his search for America, the findings from which have been printed in the February number of *Esquire*. "Sufferer" may be more than a little imprecise applied to Mr. Salisbury, for he was sent out on his mission by the Xerox Corporation and paid very handsomely for his efforts. According to reports in the *New York Times*, Xerox paid Mr. Salisbury $40,000 for six months' work, along with $15,000 in expenses, in addition to framing his article with two full-page advertisements in the February *Esquire*. "The choice of subject," one of the ads announced, "was left entirely to Mr. Salisbury and his editors. Xerox exercised no editorial judgment over the content." A member of the craft myself, I am all for writers getting as much money as they can for their work; and, having read Mr. Salisbury's article, entitled "Travels Through America," I believe the Xerox Corporation did not in any way interfere with the writing of it. The project seems to be similar, as the Xerox Corporation claims, to that of a corporation sponsoring a television special. "Now," the Xerox ad in *Esquire* runs, "you are about to see a new kind of Xerox special—this one in print." The only thing in question is the quality of the show Harrison Salisbury puts on.

Xerox, an old joke has it, never came up with anything original, and it is sad to have to report that the joke has a true application to Mr. Salisbury's "Travels Through America." As Dan Wakefield turns his television dial to the afternoon soaps for his truth about America, Mr. Salisbury boards and debarks jet airplanes for his. The problem is that Mr. Salisbury totes along such heavy luggage—of an ideological kind. He appears to be, for example, an admirer of China under Mao, where, he claims, the extended family has held together and where the notion of serving the people is still revered by leaders. He greatly admires a high school girl in Minnesota who "looks and acts like her heroine, Bernadette Devlin." Mr. Salisbury has what used to be called "a case" on youth. Older Negroes and youth are the only two groups accorded his unstinting admiration. Now in his late sixties, Mr. Salisbury appears to be afflicted with the disease known as youthenescence: the belief among some of the aging that youth can do no wrong. Throughout his article the vocabulary of youth is regularly pressed into service. "We are trashing our people," he writes in connection with American treatment of the aged. People he visits are "deep into" Jung and ecology. Others are keeping a "low profile" or living their own "lifestyle." Things, for Mr. Salisbury, "all hang out." Such language is the verbal equivalent of denim, and is unseemly when worn by an older man.

Early in his article Mr. Salisbury writes: "Let me be honest. I cannot put it *all* together." But he is mistaken here. He has put it all together. Every current cliché about America is to be found in his article. Aloft or aground, Mr. Salisbury always has time to pay uncritical homage to every scrap of received opinion, every shred of conventional wisdom mouthed or scribbled about the United States. We are a violent country. We are a country ruled by a matriarchy. Vietnam remains a festering wound in our stomach. Our cities are jungles. Our countryside is being eaten up. Youth of the seventies is not as passionate as youth of the sixties. Youth generally, though, is as dependably idealistic as taxi drivers encountered in Mr. Salisbury's pages are dependably mean-spirited. Truths, half-truths, quarter-truths, tenth-truths, outright falsehoods, all slosh together in this cliché pudding of his devising. Visits Mr. Salisbury makes to Robert Bly, Hunter Thompson, Daniel Ellsberg, and Charles Reich, all of whom he openly admires, are utterly predictable, his conversations with each man bearing the same relationship to intellectual discourse as Muzak does to music: prepackaged, flat, heard too often. So sodden with clichés is Mr. Salisbury's "Travels Through America" that even when he describes a landscape one expects to be shown a color-slide.

No, Harrison Salisbury is decidedly not the

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Alexis de Tocqueville of our age. Insisting upon his optimism about America throughout his article, he ends up with an unearned quotation from the great French writer himself: "Future events, whatever they may be, will not deprive the Americans of their climate or their inland seas, their great rivers or their exuberant soil. Nor will bad laws, revolutions and anarchy be able to obliterate that love of prosperity and spirit of enterprise which seem to be the distinctive characteristic of their race or extinguish altogether the knowledge that guides them on their way." One finally puts down "Travels Through America" thinking that, instead of Harrison Salisbury on Alexis de Tocqueville, how much more interesting it would be to have Alexis de Tocqueville on Harrison Salisbury.

What if de Tocqueville were to return to America today, prepared to write a second and contemporary version of *Democracy in America?* Suppose, further, that he came to you, armed with a letter of introduction, to ask advice on how best he might proceed on his new researches. What advice ought he to be given?

If de Tocqueville is to make a useful start in understanding, as he might put it, "the uncertain physiognomy" of our country, I should suggest two indispensable items to him: an American Express card and a copy of Evelyn Waugh's slender novel about modern journalism, *Scoop*. The first will facilitate his getting round the country; the second, although written nearly forty years ago by an Englishman, will facilitate his understanding of the contemporary intellectual terrain over which he will be traveling. In *Democracy in America* de Tocqueville tended to scant the press, allowing it only scattered pages—most of them, to be sure, pure gold, as in the following: "To cull the inestimable benefits assured by freedom of the press, it is necessary to put up with the inevitable evils springing therefrom. The wish to enjoy the former and avoid the latter is to indulge in one of those illusions with which sick nations soothe themselves when, weary of struggle and exhausted by exertion, they seek means to allow hostile opinions and contradictory principles to exist together at the same time—in the same land." That is excellent, but one wonders if it doesn't come at things at rather too high a level of generality. An underpinning of sorts from Waugh might prove salutary, as in the following definition of the news by one of the characters in *Scoop,* himself a journalist: "News is what a chap who doesn't care much about anything wants to read. And it's only news until he's read it. After that it's dead."

De Tocqueville is famous for his perspicacity, his supreme intelligence, and wit, but the quality of his sense of humor is not so well known. If he is to write a book about contemporary America, his humor had better be of the first order. A sense of humor might well be required for the first exercise I would suggest for his new attempt to understand America. As a further introduction to our national life, after nearly a century and a half away from it, I think it would be useful for him to find out all he can about the following list of people:

1. Telly Savalas
2. Mean Joe Green
3. Halston
4. Babe Paley
5. Waylon Jennings
6. Bob Guccione
7. Werner Erhard
8. Clay Felker
9. Stevie Wonder
10. Gore Vidal

This list may have the look of frivolity about it, but allow me to offer my assurance about both my earnestness and the thought that went into its compilation. First, anyone who does not know these names cannot be said to know contemporary America thoroughly. Second, the list gives a fine sense of the circus quality of much of our national life. And, third, everyone on this list either earns large sums of money or garners a great deal of publicity—and in most instances both. Because wealth and fame are two of the traditional rewards societies pay to those they value most, it will be useful for de Tocqueville to know about some of the men and women contemporary America so rewards. To take account of the services they provide, to understand the reasons why they have been thrust (or in some cases been able to thrust themselves) into the limelight should prove en-

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lightening to a man of de Tocqueville's extraordinary subtlety of observation. Besides, it would be a splendid thing in itself to have de Tocqueville, a master in the portrayal and understanding of such figures as Louis-Philippe, Lamartine, and Louis Napoleon, apply these same skills to Mean Joe Green, Waylon Jennings, and Gore Vidal. What, one wonders, would he make of men raised to national exaltation, one of whom has the job of knocking senseless other men called quarterbacks; another of whom writes and sings songs about truck drivers, unrequited love, and heavy drinking; and yet another of whom tells his countrymen, over and over again in essays and novels, what utter swine they are?

If de Tocqueville would wish, as he put it in his *Recollections,* "to consider the state of mores and opinions" in the United States, he would, alas, have to spend a good bit of his time investigating our media. These have come to have a vaster role than even the prophetic de Tocqueville could have imagined. What the media in America tell us sometimes seems all we know, but always considerably less than we need to know. Because the manifestations of the media are ubiquitous in contemporary America, the visiting Frenchman could doubtless use some help to discover which among them would most repay his attention.

First among them would have to be the *New York Times,* both daily and Sunday editions, which is the nearest thing we have to a national newspaper and which is, as it happens, my own favorite soap opera. I would instruct M. de Tocqueville to read that newspaper as I do, bypassing the editorials and lightly skimming the major news about politics and economics and international affairs, so as to reserve his concentration for its oddments. The "family/style" page, with its concern for status in matters of food, dress, and furniture, is certainly worthy of his serious attention. So, too, are those two- and three-inch fillers at the bottoms of columns about "Coup Attempt in Zaire" and "Arab-Israeli Border Clash." Gold is sometimes buried down there, such as the nugget I once discovered about a man who wished to be—and apparently was—buried in his new Lincoln Continental (whether sitting up at the wheel or stretched out along the back seat, an important detail, the story did not say). De Tocqueville might look as well at those stories that creep into the newspaper on slow news days ("Chief Justice Warren, on Eightieth Birthday, Sees No Trend in Berger Court" is one I shall always prize) and ponder what they are doing there. Surely he would find on his own, and find fascinating, the Op-Ed page, that splendid simulacrum of the notion of "dialogue," which, as construed by the *New York Times,* is an exercise in playing both ends without a middle.

In a letter of 1843 to Eugène Stoffels, de Tocqueville wrote: "Man with his vices, his weaknesses, his virtues, this confused medley of good and ill, high and low, goodness and depravity, is yet, take him all in all, the object on earth most worthy of study, of interest, of pity, of attachment, and of admiration. And since we haven't got angels, we can attach ourselves to nothing greater and more worthy of our devotion than our own kind." De Tocqueville would perhaps not be surprised to find his interest in man—that is, in people—mirrored in contemporary Americans, although he would doubtless have worthwhile things to say about the form this interest has taken in recent years in the media. It found its first outlet, this peculiar interest, in the "People" and "Newsmakers" sections of *Time* and *Newsweek,* whence it was picked up by the *New York Times* and nearly every other major American newspaper. These sections usually consist of gossip, short takes—sometimes of a few lines, sometimes of a middling-size paragraph—and are generally the most read segments of those magazines and newspapers in which they appear. So well read are they that, inevitably, Time-Life, Inc., has in recent years published a magazine exclusively catering to this interest. *People* it is called, but "Peephole" is how it is best thought of, and it ought to be commended to M. de Tocqueville's attention.

The editors at *People* let it, as Mr. Harrison Salisbury might say, all hang out or, more precisely, attempt to get everyone else to let theirs hang out. Subjects for *People* in any given week might include Alan Page, the defensive lineman of the Minnesota Vikings, in his bath with his wife; the actor Jack Nicholson's hair transplant; Princess Margaret's love affair ("tropical tryst with a youthful

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suitor"); the forthcoming marriage of Miss America; the sex life of a shot-putter ("Someday, says Brian Oldfield wistfully, he'll stash away enough money to pursue his true calling —poetry and philosophy"); Steve McQueen's new beard; the home life of the Italian tenor Luciano Pavarotti; the problems of the chief of our secret service in guarding presidential candidates; the daily life of a midwife in Laredo, Texas; zippy quotes from Jack Ford, Sonny Bono, Jeanne Moreau; and more, much more than one might think anyone could possibly want. But the appetite for such an extortionate amount of trivia is unslakable, as is, apparently, the appetite for celebrity. Here I should refer M. de Tocqueville to the wisdom of a character in *Scoop,* who remarks:

> But of course a journalist is welcome everywhere. . . . As a rule there is one thing you can count on in our job—popularity. There are plenty of disadvantages I grant you, but you *are* liked and respected. Ring people up any hour of the day or night, butt into their houses uninvited, make them answer a string of damn fool questions when they want to do something else—they like it. Always a smile, and the best of everything for the gentlemen of the Press.

Along with one to *People,* I am afraid that a subscription will have to be arranged for M. de Tocqueville to the publications of Mr. Clay Felker: *New York,* the *Village Voice,* and, a new magazine about to appear, *New West.* As Hugh Hefner once was to prurience—I do not mean to imply reform, only the entry into the field of serious competitiors—so Clay Felker is to consumption (not the disease but the consumer's art). Like no one else in America at this time, Mr. Felker knows his countrymen in their basest aspects: unquenchable in their thirst for talk about sex, power, money, status, and goods. As a young man Mr. Felker studied at the school of *Esquire,* where he was a subeditor, but he is *cher maître* now, and his own magazines are surpassing works of art. The art involved is that of window dressing, of putting the best possible face on the lowest possible interests. Especially is this so in *New York,* the first of the magazines under his control. Who has the best corned beef sandwich in New York City? Which of its celebrity customers are no longer regulars at the restaurant Elaine's? What are the salaries of the celebrated? Are upper-middle-class women taking working-class lovers? All this is interlarded with pages and pages and pages about indoor plants and furniture and food and wine, the lot overlaid with twin myths—that modern day New York is an adventure of great fun and that each of us, the magazine's readers, has an income of roughly $100,000 a year.

Although M. de Tocqueville may raise an aristocratic eyebrow at the details he confronts in the pages of *People* and *New York* (he also should occasionally glimpse copies of *Vogue, Esquire, Rolling Stone,* and *Women's Wear Daily*), he would not, I suspect, be much surprised at the general tendency of the spectacle there played out. In chapter 17 of part 2 of volume 2 of *Democracy in America,* the chapter entitled "How the Aspect of Society in the United States Is at Once Agitated and Monotonous," he, perceptive as ever, notes: People in democracies "certainly are subject continually to great vicissitudes, but as the same successes and the same reverses are continually recurring, the name of the actors is all that changes, the play being always the same. American society appears animated because men and things are constantly changing; it is monotonous because all these changes are alike."

Shameful though it might seem to subject a first-class mind like de Tocqueville's to the drivel of so much journalism, one doesn't know quite where else to direct his attention. Once upon a time, and not so very long ago at that, one might have set out for him, as for any other intelligent foreign visitor, a course of the best novels in contemporary America. Having done so, one might have been assured that de Tocqueville would acquire from them the important truths about the way we live now. But, sad to report, American novelists, with only a few exceptions, have ceased to perform their once traditional function as historians of contemporary American life. The action for them is apparently elsewhere, and correspondingly (and some would say appropriately) their readers are no longer so interested in fiction. A single essay by Tom Wolfe tends to make a greater splash, a more insistent noise, than a longish novel by, say, John Updike. Ours is preeminently the age of jour-

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nalism. Here conditions are not so very different than de Tocqueville discovered them to be in the 1830s. "Only the journalists," he then wrote, "strike me as truly American. They certainly are not great writers, but they speak their country's language and they make themselves heard."

A certain amount of legwork would be in order for Alexis de Tocqueville's second visit. He ought to see the West that was not open to him upon his first visit: Los Angeles, Aspen, Las Vegas. An interview with Mayor Richard J. Daley could scarcely fail to produce fascinating observations. A black slum, a wealthy suburb, a singles' bar, a skyscraper, a lunch at McDonald's—these, too, ought to be put on the itinerary. Time must be set aside for at least a two-hour tour of Bloomingdale's department store in New York, if only to check the validity of the observations de Tocqueville made in his chapter entitled "The Taste for Physical Comfort in America." In that chapter he noted:

> But when distinctions of rank are blurred and privileges abolished, when patrimonies are divided up and education and freedom spread, the poor conceive an eager desire to acquire comfort, and the rich think of the danger of losing it. A lot of middling fortunes are established. Their owners have enough physical enjoyments to get a taste for them, but not enough to content them. They never win them without effort or indulge in them without anxiety.

Perhaps, after all, only twenty minutes at Bloomingdale's will be necessary.

Our distinguished visitor ought also to log in a few hours in front of an American television set. I would recommend the "Today" show and the "Tonight" show and possibly a few items in between: Walter Cronkite portentously reading the evening news, a situation comedy, perhaps a pro football game. But "Today" and "Tonight" seem important for him to see: the former for the jumble of American life it provides, the latter for the strong whiff of show business fraudulence it provides. As American types, Barbara Walters and Johnny Carson figure to incite excellent commentary on de Tocqueville's part. Would he, one wonders, fall into addressing the latter as "Johnny"? It does seem rather doubtful.

"But mostly U.S.A. is the speech of the people," wrote John Dos Passos at the outset of his grand trilogy. What of that speech—and what would de Tocqueville make of it in its contemporary aspect? He was hard on, but not incorrect about, our use of language during his visit here in 1831. He remarked, among other things, upon our abundance of abstract terms, noting that "they make expression quicker but conceptions less clear." Permit me, on behalf of my fellow Americans, to say, "Monsieur, you ain't heard nothing yet!" Attend Jimmy Connors, our premier tennis professional, speaking of his mother: "And now, you know, I listen to *mom*, but it's on a relationship basis, you know?" Attend Mrs. Anita Hoffman writing to her husband Abbie: "I more than anyone else know all you have to show off, but if life with you were to be always admiring your trip with none of my own, I don't think I could hack it." Attend a television listing for "The Adams Chronicles": "Continuing adventures in the lifestyles of the founding fathers." Attend, finally, de Tocqueville: "I wonder if vagueness may not have a secret charm for talkers and writers in these lands. . . . Democratic citizens . . . will often have vacillating thoughts, and so language must be loose enough to leave them play."

It might be argued that I have done us as a nation and de Tocqueville as a writer a disservice by highlighting the freakish in my list of items he ought to read and view. Yet it is, I would counter in my defense, precisely the jumble and jangle and jumpiness of contemporary America that makes it at once so distinctive and so damnably hard to pin down. Despite the fact that we are now supplied with more information than at any time in our history—newspapers, magazines, television, public opinion polls, statistical reports, all-day radio news stations—a case can be made that we probably know less, or (what is much the same thing) can make less sense of what we know, than ever before. What do people in America think? How do they behave? Is what is true of opinion and behavior in New York City also true of opinion and behavior in Pine Bluff, Arkansas? Are Los Angeles, California, and Sterling, Illinois, except for the fact that they both happen to fall within our national boundaries,

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really part of the same nation? Can what Evelyn Waugh said in *Scoop* about his fictional country of Ishmaelia not also be said of the United States: "As there was no form of government common to the peoples thus segregated, nor tie of language, history, habit or belief, they were called a Republic"?

While writing this column, I asked a friend what advice he might offer Alexis de Tocqueville were he to return to America today. "I would tell him," he replied, in an answer that did not want for terseness, "go home." Yet de Tocqueville seems scarcely likely to have taken such advice. He did not wholly approve of us in the 1830s, and it is probable that he would not be any more approving now. Given a choice, his tendency was to prefer aristocracies, although of the kind cited by Ibsen—an aristocracy of "character and mind and will." But now that aristocracies are more obsolete than dueling, and democracies heavily outnumbered by oligarchies and simple despotisms, his sympathies might be somewhat altered—if not his method of inquiry, which, whatever his sympathies, was disinterested, measured, and wise. To him, most trenchant of students of societies, the panorama presented by the United States might well remain tempting, even in its modern muddle.

Among his many intellectual qualities, de Tocqueville had a special skill for recognizing and resolving contradictions. Surely no more fertile field for this skill is available than America. What would he make of our combined confidence and our taste for self-denigration, our decency and our brutality, our acquisitiveness and our guilt about our affluence, our liberality and our conservatism? What, above all, would he make of the fact that we devote more time and energy to national introspection than any other nation yet remain most in the dark about ourselves? Would he find a source of strength in our ignorance about ourselves? Unity in our division? A strain of uniformity in our variousness? Whatever he would find, whatever he would make of it all, it is difficult not to believe that, nearly a century and a half after his original visit, de Tocqueville would feel America still offers the most interesting show on earth.

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Social Science: The Public Disenchantment

A Symposium

In a most interesting and too-little-commented-upon article in the *New York Times Magazine* last year entitled "Knowledge Dethroned," Robert Nisbet remarked upon the disenchantment that has of late set in with the public in its view of scholars in the sciences and social sciences. If the scholar-scientist was a heroic figure as recently as a decade or so ago, today, Professor Nisbet contends, he is considered a good deal less than heroic. If he is not, as in the view of some, "a combination ne'er-do-well and enemy of both nature and the human community," then, in the view of most, he is a man whose claims to special knowledge about social problems and their solution are no longer quite credible. Professor Nisbet cites a number of causes for this decline in public prestige, but not least among them has been "the behavior of men of knowledge during the last quarter-century and in the whole structure of what came to be called, so pretentiously, the knowledge industry."

"An alien spirit of pride, even arrogance, seized the learned disciplines," Professor Nisbet wrote, and their members came forth to "assume the role of priests in the new church of knowledge." In the social sciences especially did this hubris run high, and social scientists pushed to the fore claiming that, with proper support, they could end urban decay, eradicate poverty, ease racial and ethnic tensions, reduce crime, control the economy, shore up the breakdown of the family, and accomplish much else besides. As is now known, they were able to do none of these things. For the social sciences, the result appears to have been a vast deflation of prestige and a concomitant loss of public confidence in their claims to special insight into complicated problems.

THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR sent the above two paragraphs to a number of distinguished American social scientists, and asked them to respond to the following questions:

1. Do you believe that there has in fact been a loss of public confidence in the ability of social scientists to provide important knowledge about the solution of social

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problems and the formation of social policy? If so, do you think this loss of confidence is merited by the behavior of social scientists over the past ten or so years, or is it instead the result of something else?

2. What effect do you think the diminution of the prestige of the social sciences is likely to have both within the social sciences and on the role of social science in the public realm?

3. What role do you think social scientists will play in connection with social problems and social policy over the next few years? And, finally, what role do you think they ought to play?

James S. Coleman

Professor Nisbet contends that there has been a vast deflation of prestige of social scientists and a loss of public confidence in their abilities. There is, I think, a germ of truth in this analysis of the change that has occurred; but I look at the change in a somewhat different way.

It is not, I believe, the fact that before the last quarter-century (and most especially, the last ten years) there had been a high level of confidence in social scientists' abilities to solve social problems, and a high level of prestige accorded to them. It was, rather, that social scientists were seldom regarded as having anything useful or important to say that was relevant to social policy, and were therefore left to attend to their academic pursuits. Now, after the last decade, social scientists are regarded as powerful participants in society, with the mixture of respect and antagonism, attention and hostility that such a position induces. They are not immune from attacks, as they were so long as their activities had little impact on society. Nor should they any longer be immune—those whose activities do have social consequences—because they do strengthen the hand of certain interests, at a cost to opposing interests. I believe, then, that it is not the failures of the social scientists to perform adequately, but their very entry into the arena of social action that has changed the perspective of the public toward social scientists. Nor do I believe that the change is one of a loss of prestige and public confidence, but a much more complex one that involves both the power and the faults of social scientists.

I believe it is useful to see just how the wholesale entry of social

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scientists into social action (and on the fringes of social action) came about. The decade of the 1960s, particularly with the initiation of the Johnson administration programs, was a decade of rapid social change, with many governmental and foundation programs designed to stimulate and hurry that change. That many of these programs were ill conceived, poorly executed, or badly financed is not at issue here. What is the case is that even if these programs had been perfectly designed and executed, they must necessarily have created a set of favoring interests and a set of opposing interests. To bring these programs into being and to carry them out against the opposing interests, their proponents made use of whatever aids were available. A major potential aid was the expertise of the social scientist, which was not easily countered, both because of the regard accorded to statistical facts and because the social scientist, heretofore outside the political arena, was seen as an impartial expositor of those facts.

This potential aid from social science became available to the proponents of programs of social change, and not to their opponents, for two reasons: first, the proponents had money for research and social action, whereas their opponents had none; and second, the social scientists' values were highly consistent with the egalitarian aims of the programs. The reduction of inequality is a strong value among many social scientists, and the programs offered an opportunity to see one's skills employed in directions that accorded with one's deeply held values.

In this way, there was a symbiosis between the proponents of programs to effect social change and the social scientists; but there was little basis for symbiosis between social scientists and the opponents of programs calling for change.

A caveat should be introduced here: one additional motive on the part of social scientists, which was in some cases strong enough to overcome opposing values, was the desire for power, the desire to have an effect in the real world outside the academy. Some social scientists employed their services in pursuit of the Vietnam War despite those hesitations induced by their values. Daniel Ellsberg, before his exposé of the Pentagon Papers, typifies this kind of action. Not all employment of social scientists in matters of social action was toward egalitarian-aimed domestic programs. But a large part of it was.

Thus social scientists became a potent weapon for the proponents of the programs of social change, a weapon that aided both in the initiation of the programs and in their legitimation once initiated. The result, ten years later, is a changed conception of the social scientist—no longer as a dispassionate and disinterested observer or analyst of the social scene,

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but rather as a participant (or at least an aide) in the social and political arena. This change, as I have described it, is not wholly at odds with Professor Nisbet's conception of the change that has occurred, but there are important differences. The change that I have described does not envision the social scientist of the future as a discredited and discarded charlatan, but as a social force that will likely be more widely used in the future. In fact, there are indications that the use of social scientists and the research results of social science will come to be considerably broader, as opponents of particular changes come to recognize the value of having systematic evidence on issues that they see as important, to counter the evidence that has been brought to the attack by the proponents of programs of change.

There is, finally, another matter. After the discipline of physics had come to be seen as a powerful force in society—as a result of the creation of the first atomic bomb—there was a long period before society learned that physicists' opinions on matters of nuclear policy were not to be regarded as conclusive, that their technical skills did not provide perfect wisdom in matters in which physics intersected with public policy. I believe we are in a similar period now in social science, not because the social sciences enjoyed success comparable to the discovery of atomic power, but because of the power that social research and social scientists in some cases have had in the creation of policy. Only slowly does the general public come to realize that the technical capabilities of the social scientist do not make his opinions conclusive on issues where social science intersects with policy. But in time that realization does come, just as in time there comes a broader set of skills by non-social scientists to draw their own implications from research results. And as these changes occur, the role of the social scientist in social policy will come to be less important, even as the role of social research in informing public policy becomes more important.

Morris Janowitz

1. I believe that Robert Nisbet overstates his case, both about the pretensions of social science and about the reaction against the expectations that social scientists have generated. There can be no doubt that some social scientists overstated the potentialities of their methodologies

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and that others made use of their academic positions to press for partisan political goals. The utterances of social scientists in the 1960s came to have wide currency in the mass media. In fact, in particular areas, such as the desegregation of schools, their personal views on social policy were stated as if they were effectively grounded in social research. When these spokesmen altered their views on the busing issue, considerable public confusion arose.

But the state of social science and its position in American society cannot be inferred only from these public controversies. An advanced industrial society requires a mass of day-to-day as well as long-term social intelligence. The social scientists remain indispensable in supplying such basic information, and there is no indication that this role is declining or that society has lost its interest in these data. To the contrary, there is greater public and private support for this function. Interest continues in the theories and concepts of social sciences as well. Social scientists are now regarded with greater skepticism when they recommend public policy, but this is desirable and hardly implies that they have been or will be eliminated from informed debate.

2. Robert Nisbet's description of the changing position of the social scientists in the United States is incomplete. A good deal of the present soul searching is linked in the first instance to the end of the growth and expansion of higher education in the United States. Social scientists, like university professors in general, pressed too hard for the unthinking expansion of higher education at the expense of upgrading primary and secondary education. In the late 1970s, job opportunities for Ph.D.'s are declining, and therefore the prestige of university professors is suffering. We are not dealing only with the plight of social scientists, but with basic issues in reassessing the role of higher education in a society that faces a declining ability to produce industrial products, or even services, in an effective and efficient manner.

3. In the social sciences a sharp distinction between basic and applied research does not operate. The social scientists need to emphasize sound research, and by doing so they will be able to contribute to their public role. I can only speak from my own experience and from that of my colleagues. For over twenty years I have devoted myself to research on militarism and military institutions. During this period, the university's opposition to the study of these topics has gradually been overcome. I believe that we are producing higher levels of academic research in this vital area than in the past, although there is much yet to be accomplished. A few scholars have distorted their academic function, but on the whole the field has maintained its academic integrity and

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vitality. In turn, over the long run, the solid research of my colleagues has raised the level of policy analysis and public discussion of civil-military relations. In particular, careful academic research has played a critical role in the transition from conscription to the all-volunteer force. The persistent and profound issues for an all-volunteer military service require continuing research of the highest academic quality.

The issues of militarism and war and peace are central to our period. No scholar has ever believed that the work of the intellectual world would solve these profound issues. This is the task of effective public leadership. But responsible social scientists in this area believe in the value of academic research, not because it supplies engineering answers to particular problems, but because it is an element in the struggle for enlightenment.

Harry G. Johnson

It seems to me indisputable both that there has been a loss of public confidence in the usefulness of social scientists, and that this loss is merited by the behavior of the social scientists themselves. One must, however, be wary of the American tendency to blame people for responding to the social forces that act on them, and particularly for not sternly refusing to accept greatness when public opinion seems to be thrusting it upon them.

The questions under discussion, I believe, have their roots in the tremendous prestige natural scientists acquired during and after the Second World War, as creators of the atomic bomb and, later, as a result of the launching of Sputnik. Social scientists were eclipsed, partly because of the inhibiting influence of the McCarthy period on social inquiry—except to the extent that they could offer help in the competition for fast economic growth, which they mistakenly felt confident they could do. With disillusionment about the beneficence of technical advance and the power of growth as a social-problem solvent, social scientists saw their chance for social prestige, partly through a return to older philosophical concerns about equality, justice, and economic welfare, and partly through unleashing the strain of social criticism that is latent somewhere in the motivations of most serious students of social science, but that had been suppressed by McCarthyism and American

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jingoism. Economics, in particular, saw its opportunity to guide society to improvement on the basis of a mixture of Pigovian utilitarian welfare economics and Keynesian full employment policy. Few if any realized that full employment may be a necessary objective in a hierarchically ordered society without a social security system, but may well not be the free choice of a population amply provided for by claims on other people's output; or that justice is one thing when applied to claims on the ownership of land and other property or the opportunity to acquire an education, but something quite different when applied to claims on the distribution of the product of current effort for those who are unable or unwilling to produce the effort.

In short, the social sciences have lost prestige because they have claimed to be able to deliver more than they can possibly deliver. And worse, the claim has been based on a very superficial understanding of the nature of a social system, and on a consistent refusal to understand the basic constraints on social possibilities imposed by the overall limitation of economic resources and the manifold defects of the human social being as an instrument from which to forge the ideal society. As already suggested, however, it would be superficial to lay the blame on individual social scientists or outstanding social scientists. Few people have either the fortitude or the disciplined training to refuse to accept another person's belief that they possess special skill and knowledge; and very few indeed who have risen to the top of a social science profession have been trained to resist the belief that they can and should do something to solve the problems of their less fortunate fellowmen.

As for the future, it is difficult to predict. Several kinds of moral disintegration and loss of professional morale are easy to envisage: retreat into narrowly defined and socially innocuous teaching and research; politicization of professional discussion and debate in terms of ancient and mythical political stereotypes such as "radical economics"; the search for a new legitimacy in "interdisciplinary" research; the transformation of the social scientist into a rentier earning his income from private consultation or deriving his prestige from rather low-level government consultation. An inquest into what has gone wrong and why, leading to a new social science research and theorizing program, seems called for but is unlikely to take place, primarily because the concept of a "scientific community" is a hollow fiction by comparison with the reality of the self-seeking individual scientist. For the majority of social scientists the future is likely to be a matter of demonstrating the value of previous training, experience, and accumulated sense, by serving the community in small but tangibly useful capacities.

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Robert Lekachman

1. I doubt (*a*) that the more extravagant claims of social scientists were ever widely accepted beyond the learned journals; (*b*) that in public esteem social scientists have declined more precipitously than other establishment types—corporate managers, politicians, lawyers, doctors, et al.; (*c*) that the public was ever wrong in applying a pound or two of salt to the wisdom of the pundits.

A few dusty words for the economists in particular, whose hubris a few years back was remarkable to behold. John Kennedy's 1962 Yale commencement speech, presumably drafted by his economic advisers, epitomized the fashionable outlook and errors of the decade. Mr. Kennedy impatiently scolded those who continued to insist that economic problems are matters of ideological conflict rather than simple affairs of technique. The New Frontier, Kennedy was less than coy in admitting, had cornered the very best technicians. Amid the euphoria of the new economics and the apparent success of the 1964 tax cut in stimulating economic growth, it was fatally easy for those who presided over these miracles to claim that with the aid of a suitably domesticated Keynes they had at length tamed the business cycle and teased out the secret of full employment without inflation. As recent events have embarrassingly revealed, they have instead performed the not inconsiderable feat of combining double-digit inflation with the highest unemployment since the very eve of World War II.

How come? Economic policy is not merely or even mostly the application of elegant theoretical abstractions or the cranking out of econometric formulas. As mainstream economists and their allies in related disciplines are reluctant to concede, social action relates to the location and concentration of private power and private interest. Once this simple truth, a platitude of nineteenth-century classical economics, is taken to heart, it is quite easy to explain why, despite the thirty-year life of the 1946 Employment Act, the United States has enjoyed full employment only during wartime. Unemployment has its uses for the rich and powerful. Routine or unpleasant labor gets performed only under the spur of necessity. Give the rabble dignified job opportunities and who will iron Senator Long's shirts, clean the bedrooms of luxury hotels, and minister to gourmet tastes in Manhattan's better restaurants? Run the economy at full employment and unions will agitate for redesign of

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assembly lines and worker participation in management, pursuing the frightening example of their Swedish brothers and sisters. Moreover, full employment encourages our private monopolists and oligopolists to push up prices so rapidly as to endanger the legitimacy of their own position. Slack in labor markets is something of a protection against the consequences of overreaching by our corporate masters.

Such a diagnosis implies that full employment and price stability are reconcilable, but not by the fiscal tinkering favored by the new economists. Americans can really enjoy both of these attractive arrangements within the context of such interferences with accepted allocations of power as reduced managerial freedom of control over the organization of work in the factory and the administration of prices. Appalled at such "unscientific," value-laden, "ideological" recommendations, respectable economists have retreated in disorder to mutterings about Phillips curve trade-offs between inflation and unemployment, and revisions of their textbook definitions of full employment to accord with whatever has been happening recently in labor markets. A generation ago 2.5–3 percent was a respectable measure of unavoidable frictional unemployment. Five percent appears to be the new figure. Newsspeak is a handy language.

2. It is entirely wholesome that social scientists are now marked-down gurus, both because they deserve their fate and because adversity may guide them toward serious reconsideration of their tiresome pretensions to ethical neutrality and ideological purity. For some time to come, social policy, for better or worse (I think for better), will be formulated in Washington and elsewhere with less heed to the views of the specialists. No great loss. Those who worry about the health of the economy should be cheered by the television spectacle of Democratic presidential candidates openly savaging a panel of economists. Good work.

3. At their best, social scientists have been men and women of openly declared moral vision. To this vision they have subordinated the arcana of their craft, not the reverse. Gradually economists have drifted into the situation of dentists, lawyers, and accountants, at the service of any fee-paying client. A half-century ago, A. C. Pigou, a teacher of Keynes, defined the role of economics in words that ought to be generalized much beyond economics:

> I would add one word for any student beginning economic study who may be discouraged by the severity of the effort which the study . . . seems to require of him. The complicated analyses which economists endeavor to carry through are not merely gymnastic. They are instruments for the bettering of human life. The

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misery and squalor that surround us, the injurious luxury of some wealthy families, the terrible uncertainty overshadowing many families of the poor—these are evils too plain to be ignored. By the knowledge that our science seeks, it is possible that they may be restrained. Out of the darkness light! To search for it is the task. To find it perhaps the prize, which the "dismal science of Political Economy" offers those who face its discipline.

Contrast this echo of great days in economics with this comment by Kenneth J. Arrow, a Nobel laureate: "An economist by training thinks of himself as the guardian of rationality, the ascriber of rationality to others, the prescriber of rationality to the social world. It is this role that I will play." And an excellent role, too, were it not that the world is run, as it always has been, according to the rules of politics, popular passion, ideological commitment, and group interest. I rather suspect that when social scientists refresh themselves with these elderly truths, they will begin again to utter words of value to their fellow citizens. But not right now.

Martin Mayer

Any collective enterprise calling itself a "science" will be judged and rewarded by its success in answering if/then questions. During the 1950s and 1960s, the social sciences claimed a greatly expanded capacity to answer such questions. In industrial and commercial areas, their performance approached their claims, given normal discount for puffery; in public policy and human service areas, however, performance fell unacceptably short of what had been promised. The result is that social scientists have lost public standing but not income.

Both conceptually and practically, the social sciences failed through their inability to formulate the "if" clauses in their questions. Businessmen were able to supply such clauses themselves, asking specifically about the acceptability of new products, the costs and benefits of possible clauses in labor contracts, the viability of certain locations, et cetera. But politicians, educators, bureaucrats, and publicists kept asking the social scientists to propose policies, and when these policies were carried out—in slums, schools, hospitals, jails—the outcomes were wildly different from what had been predicted.

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The vice of the social scientist is that unless somebody gives him a narrowly delimited target he will concentrate his efforts not on what is really happening but on what somebody else has written about it. The working tools that the various social sciences have developed—the sample survey, multivariate analysis, and probability criteria—are regarded as rather dull inside as well as outside the profession. The information derived from the use of such tools rarely illustrates (let alone demonstrates) the "laws of human behavior" which are the proprietary mysteries. Especially, then, among the keepers of the keys—university teachers—the temptation is always to impose theory on the outside would rather than to test hypothesis by observation or experiment. (Jean Piaget told me in Geneva ten years ago that he had not actually visited his institute's laboratory school in about a quarter of a century; he was not engaged in making observations, he said scornfully, but in formulating the laws of human development.) This happens all over the academy—the professors of literature who read and teach criticism rather than literature itself are notorious examples—but it is peculiarly embarrassing in the professions that send their savants to seek celebrity and influence outside their fields.

Natural academic tendencies toward artificiality were multiplied in the 1960s by three retrograde factors. The first was the exciting discovery that there can be no value-free social science, which was sort of like M. Jourdain discovering that he was speaking prose; the conclusion drawn was that since objectivity was impossible it should not be sought. People who changed their minds about anything (and people do change their minds) then found that the social scientists they had once respected now had nothing to say to them at all. Another trope toward triviality was the increased stress on teaching and relations with students on the college campuses where most social scientists live; ceaseless contact with the concerns of immature and uninformed minds diminishes the capacity for sustained serious work whether the teacher works in primary school or at Harvard. Finally, as social science concepts became part of the intellectual entertainment of society, a myth-bemused literary intelligentsia played an ever-increasing role in establishing the prominence of individuals within each field, awarding apparent leadership to the fashionably meretricious.

This party is probably over. In the years ahead, social scientists will play a more important role in the actual workings of society, as they are called on to assess the consequences of individual decisions—to close that college, build that highway, sponsor the other television show. But there will be much less attention paid to the chatter about "social

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indicators," or "power elites," or "sick societies," or "repressive tolerance" that has disfigured putatively serious discussion—and turned public policy into a sequence of goose chases—for the last twenty years.

Daniel P. Moynihan

If I am to take part in this debate it were well at the outset to declare my interests. There are three, and the reader will observe some conflict among them.

First, I am a social scientist, teaching government, and have held office in the profession. I have been, for example, a member of the President's Science Advisory Committee, the last (and least) of the three social scientists to have attained to that hard-nosed fraternity (the others being Herbert Simon and James Coleman). I have been vice-president for the social sciences section of the American Association for the Advancement of Science and a member of the board of directors of the association. I have thus an interest in the reputation of the calling.

Second, I have served in the subcabinet or cabinet of the past four presidents, and have on various occasions sought to shape public policy along lines suggested by social science research. I have even been cited in a Supreme Court decision, a circumstance that I am sorry to say has become something of a claim for status! Thus I have a record of my own to defend.

Third, I am indebted to and devoted to Robert Nisbet, and would never knowingly give him pain by taking issue with an assertion of his save where some issue of ultimate truth were involved. But on matters of ultimate truth I take Nisbet's word anyway. And so the reader may anticipate that I will not clash with him.

Indeed, I have shared Nisbet's view about much of the "social science" that has been offered in support of public policy of late. I have written two books, *Maximum Feasible Misunderstanding* (1969) and *The Politics of a Guaranteed Income* (1973), dealing with this issue as it arose, first, in the Johnson administration, and second, in the Nixon administration. A sample:

> The 1960s were a period during which "social science" prescriptions for social policy had much currency, and the style grew steadily more debased. In time the most trivial assertions of upper-class petulance or lower-class anger

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were likely to be received with respect, even awe. George Sternlieb has described the process.

> In this kind of "social science," anecdotal accounts began to pass as consequential theories and models for the design of new institutions. A typical specimen of the genus is the account of how I, a young draft dodger, full of beans and aware of the fact that I wasn't going to spend my career there, came into a class of young sullens; in six months they loved me. This sort of recital became dignified both as an indictment of the flywheels of our institutions and also possibly as a model for new educational institutions of the future. The former may well have validity, but the latter defies rationality. The wonder is not the existence of a number of these anecdotal descriptions, but rather the childlike acceptance of them as a vision of a future that can be reproduced on a scale commensurate with the number of children and situations involved. The sordid fact that they enjoy such acceptance is but another indication of the extent to which we have begun to escape into fantasy.

In that same period, however, there was *another* social science of a different quality, making for profoundly different policy prescriptions. The reader who has not followed these matters ought now to ready himself to hear a tale, not unfamiliar in the history of the physical sciences, in which a more or less established body of knowledge is of a sudden challenged by a rush of new findings whose simultaneous but independent appearance suggests some large scheme of things is afoot.

Briefly, in the course of the 1960s a series of empirical studies all but demolished the expectations that significant social change of the kind the United States was seeking to bring about *could* be brought about through the means then in vogue and, to some extent, still in vogue. This is not to say nothing worked in that period. On the contrary, the Civil Rights Act of 1965 and the Voting Rights Act of 1964 were monumental successes. But other forms of intervention—the Safe Streets Act, shall we say—were not successful, and it was foreseen that they would not be. No large social theories were involved here: indeed none was attempted. Rather, there was a maturing of two methodological techniques—survey research and computer analysis—which persons of genius had developed a generation earlier. By the 1960s—although talents of the first order were sometimes involved—mere competence could produce findings unattainable, *even* by a genius, a generation earlier.

For some time I have been searching for a term by which to describe this event—for indeed it had the compactness and uniformity of just that, a discrete event which those who experienced it will so remember.

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I wonder if the term Reformation will not serve. It had something of that quality. For too long, as Lionel Trilling had foreseen and feared, the tenets of progressive government had been exempt from serious external or internal pressure. They had become overassertive and underexamined. Things were promised that could not be delivered. Some things were promised that the initial tenets of the doctrine would have held should *not* be delivered, but origins had sometimes been lost sight of. The institutional church had become encrustant and self-serving. It was, moreover, selling indulgences, as if we could buy our way out of sin, when nature and nature's God hold that crime will be punished. Along came a group of relatively young and profoundly serious scholars—of monkish mien and habit, some of them!—who challenged all this, and called for a return to essentials. I am attracted to the image of the Reformation not least by the fact that, with few exceptions, none of the reformers was of heretical disposition. Almost all had been and wished to remain faithful members of the Church. If there are some outside today, let me bear witness that they were driven out—by their intellectual and moral inferiors.

This subject deserves a book, while this note admits only of general detail. Let me, however, offer a few specifics. To my recollection, the "event" commences with the appearance in 1964 of Andrew Greeley's and Peter Rossi's *The Education of American Catholics*. The authors had set out to determine the effect of parochial education on religious practice. Contrary to the assumption of six generations of bishops, they found hardly any. That year Martin Anderson showed that urban renewal reduces the housing supply rather than increasing it, as had been assumed for a generation by housing experts, if not the poor. In 1965 I published a set of statistical correlations that showed that general economic conditions had once had a tight relationship to social structure, but that this relation had disappeared. I predicted that much social disorder was probably in store, for if improving general economic conditions would not improve social structure, what *would*? In 1966 James Coleman published his report *Equality of Educational Opportunity*, which found virtually no correlation between educational effort and educational results. After a point, a series of evaluations of experimental programs—for example, the 1969 Westinghouse study of Head Start—began confirming earlier "predictive" analysis. The single rehabilitation program that the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice could cite as a clear success, on reexamination turned out to be a clear failure. Jencks, et al., in 1973, reached even more bearish conclusions concerning other sorts of social intervention. Life began to look awfully

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random, excepting that so many things never changed!

Most of these findings were received with hostility or confusion, which was only natural. The public remained generally unaware of what was going on. But in the tougher reaches of the profession—observe the open prejudice of that description!—the case was quickly made that something had happened and things were not as they had been. The 1968–69 report of the Social Science Research Council stated:

> The difficulty we as a nation face in solving our problems is not will but knowledge. We want to eliminate poverty, crime, drug addiction and abuse; we want to improve education and strengthen family life, but we do not know how.

Nor were social scientists necessarily immobilized. In 1967–68 the American Academy of Arts and Sciences conducted a seminar on race and poverty that evolved an "income strategy" to deal with situations that seemed impervious to the established "services" strategy. This was largely Lee Rainwater's initiative. I took it back to Washington in 1969 and a flurry of legislative proposals followed, including revenue sharing and a guaranteed income. (Each of these proposals had been advanced earlier: research strengthened their case by weakening that of other strategies.) It is not the object of this note to comment on the failures of policy implied in Nisbet's thesis, nor yet to argue (as can surely be done) that there were successes also during this period. My purpose is simply to assert that in the same period an enormous dissent arose with respect to the variety of nostrums that Nisbet presumably has in mind, and, further, that this dissent was not without influence. In truth, as time passes, the swiftness with which the new thesis came to be accepted is impressive. Thus the Model Cities program was no more than announced when James Q. Wilson (1966) explained that it would fail in its declared objectives, and explained why. Within two years the federal government, or at least the White House, understood this argument. (The program was continued for quite different reasons.)

There was, however, some lag in these perceptions, and it persists. This is one of the reasons we all got a little mad at one another in those days, and why some of this quarrelsomeness also persists. Old views were being displaced by new views. Interests were involved, and their proponents defended themselves. The older views, as would be natural, were defended not least by established organs of opinion. In 1969 the Westinghouse Learning Corporation produced the first evaluation of Head Start, finding it to have had little impact. This news was received with consternation by many, and deep suspicion by some. The

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New York Times discerned a White House scheme to discredit a fine and noble enterprise, albeit the incumbent administration had nothing whatever to do with the project. Seven years later (although with little intervening acknowledgment that views have changed) the Westinghouse "findings" are routinely accepted. The report of a recent conference on this subject summed up: "A few clues to improved schooling exist in the sociological and psychological literature. But, by and large, social science can add only marginally to common sense." But they were not at the time, *save by some*. This made for much confusion. I have written of that period, and this issue:

> There is a legitimate sense in which it may be said that the President of the United States knew this to be so. But the Congress did not; the *New York Times* did not; the National Education Association did not; the Urban League did not. Moreover, the President knew they did not know. Further he had to be aware that this "best evidence" now available to him might be quite reversed by the next generation of studies. Or some startling "discovery" might take place. But for the moment this was the information he had to come to terms with.

But in the main, as this passage suggests, information at least got to some places where it was needed. Most important, this information did not at all lead to the "dismantling" of Head Start, or suchlike programs. This, evidently, is what had been feared: hence the anger at the evidence. But the government was perfectly capable of accepting the findings with patience and calm. All that had really been proven was that the task was going to be more difficult—which, curiously, also suggested that it was even more important.

That is one view. Another is that it took much too long. If one believes, as I do, that the social conditions of American cities are worse now than they were two decades ago, and that we squandered opportunities in that period that will not soon come again, then one can take the view that the whole experience was calamitous. *One* of the reasons we did not get welfare reform in 1970, when at one point all that was necessary was to get the bill to the Senate floor in order for it to be enacted, was that in large sectors of progressive opinion the view was still undisturbed that the nostrums of the 1960s were going to work. The knowledge available at the time was that they would not, and this must be seen as an indictment of our arrangements. But then this statement suggests that there is knowledge available now that a guaranteed income would "work." There is not. The fact of the matter is that we know little. My point is simply that we have known *this* for some time now, and that it may validly be described as social science knowledge.

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Harold Orlans

1. Yes, there has been some loss of confidence in social scientists and their trade, attributable in part to their excesses, pretensions, and follies but in larger part to distressing social and economic conditions and patent public policy failures that have made their pretensions more manifest. Public confidence remains higher than is merited, because confidence is a form of hope that our fate can be affected by *some* action based (among many other things) upon our shreds of knowledge.

The alternative to hope is resignation, the acceptance of things as they are, let well enough alone: not characteristic American moods. We would sooner remove and replace than let stand—trees, buildings, institutions, people. Seasonal and stylistic changes in our cars and clothes, arts and mores, ideas and policies afford a hospitable climate for abundant, vacuous "innovation," "reform," and "research."

The "spirit of pride" is not, as Nisbet states, "alien" but native to intellectuals. Ecclesiastes writes of it. Their vanity and folly did not start with the Kennedy, or end with the Johnson, administration. The follies of social science are rooted in its founders' search for immutable, infallible truths about mutable, fallible men. Stanislav Andreski observes that Comte "is the true father of contemporary sociology with its bombastic proclamations of methodological purism, accompanied by pseudo-scientific practices which often descend to the level of folly or charlatanry." Our current pretenders to the throne of science were preceded by enlightenment rationalists, Marxists, racists, geographic determinists, eugenicists, evolutionists, technocrats, sociometricians, mouse psychologists, national characterologists, and countless breeds of behaviorists. Extravagant, simplistic, ponderous, or monistic explanations are the mark of many influential intellectuals (the influence of ideas has, in any event, little to do with their validity, as the history of astrology, Catholicism, monarchy, or communism shows).

The weakening of confidence in social scientists is unlikely to last longer than previous troughs in the long-term growth of their numbers and influence, such as that from 1945 to 1958 or so, when the Reece Committee and Senator Joseph McCarthy held forth, and social science, identified with socialism and social reform, was treated with scorn or reserve by engineers and physicists like Bush, Rabi, and DuBridge, and by the National Science Foundation that they helped to establish.

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Although one stream of social science has long been identified with radical, egalitarian, or progressive forces, another, identified with religion, wealth, and the established order, once provided a balancing or, at certain universities, dominating conservative influence. With the vast expansion of graduate education following World War II, the balance shifted markedly to the liberals. In postwar presidential elections, from two to four times as many social scientists voted for the Democratic than for the Republican candidate. The relation between a scholar's politics and his ostensibly objective professional conclusions may not be mentioned in graduate school or Brookings publications, where, by decree, objectivity reigns; but the rest of us have no difficulty noting it. The unduly moderate decline in the repute of social scientists seems due to:

a) A conservative drift in the electorate (marked by Nixon's election and reelection) who reject or question various liberal doctrines.

b) Calamities and eruptions abroad and at home—Vietnam, the assassinations, riots, bombings, protests, hijackings, crimes, dope, beatniks, pornography, high unemployment, perpetual inflation, and the threat to our last idol, the automobile—which belie the assumption that intellectuals understand what is going on and that government can maintain an orderly society.

c) Hence, a distrust of experts as partisan, self-serving, and less expert than they purport to be.

d) And, of course, a distrust of government and its advisers, investigators, hirelings, and apologists, confirmed by Watergate and continuing scandals.

2. On campus and in the professional associations and publications, there has been a modest rise in the standing of historical, institutional, and humanistic approaches. Scientistic schools now face more (but not enough) intellectual criticism. Off campus—in Washington, research institutes, corporations, and consulting firms—the failures of scientism have made it more prosperous. Because, if research fails, then obviously more research is needed. Having had some apparent success in the Defense Department, "planning-programming-budgeting" and cost-benefit analyses were exported to the domestic departments in 1965 and, failing there, to the Congress; in all likelihood, state and city governments will come next. Funds for social and policy "science" are still controlled mainly by "hardheaded," shortsighted pragmatists and numerologists. Some must be heard to be believed. The staff of the Office of Management and Budget is as exotic as the pandas in the Washington Zoo but, as luck would have it, the latter are more sensible and the former are less endangered. The call for research, social "experimenta-

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tion" and "demonstration," and program "evaluation" (how words mislead!) is a convenient way for liberal and conservative forces to compromise and economizing governments to temporize.

Perhaps experts are listened to with more bemusement today than in the mid-1940s when the atomic scientists played God, but most politicians and presidents take only the advice they want (the Chicago scientists were not heeded and Oppenheimer was cruelly dispatched). Experts are now more commonly recognized as advocates and are counterposed to each other. That, however, will not decrease their number. Nothing will but a virus that strikes down Ph.D.'s.

3. Thus, social scientists will continue to play much the same role in the future as in the past, only more so; for, with the saturation of the academic marketplace, more will be employed off campus. A professorship was always a convenient position from which to seek outside income and influence, and, since the 1870s, social scientists have consistently done so. The relative influence of social scientists compared to other faculty is a more difficult question but it appears that (*a*) social scientists have gained relative to humanists; (*b*) narrower and more specialized approaches within the social sciences have gained relative to broader approaches; and (*c*) the organized enterprise for financing and conducting scheduled empirical and applied research to supply requested facts, arguments, and recommendations has grown greatly on, near, and off campus. These century-long trends are unlikely to be affected by short-term perturbations in the public esteem for the social sciences, because they reflect the massive growth of population, literacy, and higher education or semi-education; occupational and professional specialization; and the increased complexity of society and government.

Nisbet's diagnosis is better than his prescription that scholars withdraw to serious scholarship. Some have always done that—and, by choice or necessity, even some politicians like Trotsky and Churchill. To ask all scholars to address only their students and colleagues is unrealistic. A populous, literate democracy demands, digests, and discards a vast range of intellectual produce, highbrow and low, sound and specious, serious and entertaining, durable and ephemeral. It is neither possible nor desirable to extirpate all spurious, vulgar, commercial, partisan, slovenly, and popular forms of science and scholarship; pollution control will remain a serious problem in most disciplines.

Social scientists should continue to participate in public affairs, but with modesty and with candor about their political and social convictions. Their contribution would be enhanced by a fuller knowledge of philosophy, history, and politics, and a little knowledge of law and

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democracy, including the right of lay citizens to govern themselves. They should stop aping the sciences and forsake scholasticism for honest scholarship. When they are right, they should recognize that they are lucky, and when they are wrong, they should admit it. If they have nothing to say, they should say nothing; but saying more than they know is the occupational disease of professors and when you are paid to talk, silence is costly.

I hope that the career of Daniel Moynihan illustrates that intellectuals active in public affairs *need* not lose their wits or their morals. However, the thirst for influence and attention is hard for even the most distinguished intellectuals to resist (witness Tolstoy, G. B. Shaw, or Bertrand Russell), especially in their later years when attention is a welcome distraction from approaching death. Even the modest Einstein engaged in a range of public activity quite outside his sphere of competence, including the famous exchange of letters with Freud on "Why War?" In the end, perhaps all that we can say of our talkative colleagues, and they of us, is: Forgive them, for they know not what they do.

As Montaigne observed:

> It may be said, with some appearance of truth, that there is an ABC ignorance that preceded knowledge, and another, a doctoral ignorance that comes after it: an ignorance that knowledge creates and engenders, just as it uncreates and destroys the former.
>
> . . . those who treat of the most elevated subjects, and enter most deeply into them, lose themselves in the grossest and most childish nonsense, engulfed in their curiosity and presumption. . . .
>
> If I were to make up a goodly bundle of all the asinine things that have been uttered . . . I should make you wonder. . . . *Nothing can be so absurd but it has been said by some philosopher* (Cicero).

Thomas Sowell

1. There has been some reduction in public respect for intellectuals, including those intellectuals pretentious enough to call themselves "social scientists." The real question is not why this has happened, but why it took so long to happen, and why it has happened only to a moderate degree, after years of extravagant promises, disastrous results, and trendy, self-indulgent gobbledygook. Despite the title of Professor Nisbet's article, it is not *knowledge* that has been dethroned but *fraud* that has been exposed.

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The past decade has seen an almost total divorce of popular social theory from empirical verification. We "know" a thousand things for which there is no real evidence, and against which there is an ever-growing mass of ignored facts. For example, we "know" that segregated schools are inherently unequal, that capital punishment has no effect on the murder rate, that women are widespread victims of employer discrimination, that political activism is the key to minority advancement—but don't ask those who believe these things to cite chapter and verse, much less give a guided tour through the "logic" behind their conclusions. To take just one of these issues, much of the literature on capital punishment compares places and times that have had the death penalty *on the books* with places and times that did not—as if it were the words on the printed page that constituted the capital punishment. A much more careful statistical study by Gordon Tullock—based on actual executions, not words—indicates several murders prevented for every execution. *This study has been met with resounding silence.* The opposite conclusion can be expected to survive and remain ascendant for at least another generation, if not another century or two. This illustrates both the social and political power of "social science" and its intellectual and moral weakness. Although it proclaims itself "science," it has in fact become a doctrinal orthodoxy, anxious to snuff out heresy by whatever means are necessary, including passing over it in magisterial silence, for fear of "legitimating" the "wrong" kind of ideas.

2. The most likely response of "social scientists" to the current minor setback is a redoubling of the methods by which they fostered public credulity in the first place: (*a*) imitation of the outward forms of scientific methods, with none of the discipline, or depth, or objective criteria of science; (*b*) strong intimations that theirs is the only modern, honorable, socially conscious approach, and that their opponents are ignorant, biased, corrupt, or (worst of all) not chic; (*c*) a rigging of the very framework of discourse by sheer force of repetition of one particular socio-political view of the world through the mass media and through the foisting of "social studies" with the same viewpoint on a captive audience of millions in the public school system; (*d*) an erosion and disparagement of the intellectual skills that make resistance to mass mind conditioning possible—logic, mathematics, the scientific study of semantics, a wide-ranging knowledge of history, and other aspects of, and aids to, careful, disciplined reasoning—now all sweepingly dismissed as "old-fashioned" or "irrelevant," or simply allowed to atrophy amid jazzier courses in an ever more "elective" curriculum; and (*e*) control of access to the media, the foundations, and sometimes even to

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data, to keep it from falling into the "wrong" kind of hands, belonging to people who would "misuse" it. Most of this will be done without any explicit conspiracy, but out of a mass conviction of rectitude, and a general sense of a need for social missionary work among the heathens.

3. Over the next few years, as in the past, "social scientists" can be expected to exacerbate and befog social problems and to bend social policy in the direction of their preconceptions. A thousand facts that go against these preconceptions will be filtered out—either ignored or dismissed as "exceptions"—and anything that might plausibly be presented as supporting the preconception will be highlighted and announced to a suitable blare of trumpets in the media. "Responsible" intellectuals and "social scientists" will not report "inflammatory" negative consequences of noble social experiments—for example, growing race hate after "integration"—much less reexamine the premises and value structures that led to such disasters. In short, the most sweeping cover-up of the generation will continue unabated in the post-Watergate era. Moreover, whatever new social problems lie in the future to be discovered or invented, we may rest assured that the "solution" will invariably involve more money, power, and prestige for intellectuals, whether in the government, the media, research projects, or wherever the overflow of college-trained people find refuge from the realities of life.

What role *should* intellectuals play? The question itself is strange—as if we should automatically assume a role different from that of our fellow human beings, made of the same flesh and blood, and experiencing the same range of emotions. We should take our products to the market and put them at the disposal of those who may be interested, without attempting to engage in "restraint of trade" in the media or "monopolization" in the public schools, even in the interest of noble ideals. We should be expected to take the same risks as other producers that our products may be declared shoddy, useless, or overpriced. If we are in fact convinced that we have something of value to offer, we should be willing to submit to the test of open competition.

James Q. Wilson

Social scientists during the 1960s may have longed to become, in Robert Nisbet's words, "high priests in the new church of knowledge,"

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but it is not clear to me that in fact they did. Whatever went wrong with policy making, it remains to be proved that social scientists had much to do with it. Many of us *claimed* we did, and certainly we attended enough meetings, wrote enough papers, and boasted often enough about our contacts with powerful and eminent people to convince others, and perhaps ourselves, of our influence. But I know of no facts that would warrant concluding that we had much (or little) impact on policy making. I want to suggest that, were the facts known, they would show that social scientists were of inconsequential importance in most major issues of policy.

The best-known, and perhaps the most important, new pieces of social legislation in the 1960s were the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the Economic Opportunity Act, the Model Cities program, the various civil rights acts, the Safe Streets (that is, crime) Act, Medicare, the two dozen or so consumer and ecology laws, and perhaps also the 1962 amendments to the Social Security Act and the Manpower Development and Training Act. I do not pretend to be familiar with all of them, but I would be willing to conjecture that the great majority of these initiatives did not involve significant contributions by social scientists at all. The education bill was uniquely Lyndon Johnson's—a masterful legislative finesse designed to provide federal money to local school administrators without getting the church leaders upset. I am not aware that social scientists said in advance that spending this money this way would make children more learned; I do know that several major social scientists not long after were able to show how little influence is exerted on education by differences in resources. Medicare—perhaps the most expensive single bill passed since the interstate highway system was authorized under Dwight Eisenhower—was designed and masterfully worked through Congress by Wilbur Cohen and his associates in HEW. Medicaid was added, almost as an afterthought, by Wilbur Mills.

The consumer and ecology laws were the product, by and large, of Nader's Raiders, in various guises, aided and abetted by the staffs of certain key senators—Warren Magnuson, Abraham Ribicoff, Robert F. Kennedy, Paul Douglas, and others. Public health experts and lawyers probably contributed to these matters, for better or worse, but few of them could be called social scientists. The civil rights laws were almost exclusively the result of decisions made on moral and political, not intellectual, grounds; although the Supreme Court quoted some social science in its decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954, by 1964 the debate was (properly) on very different grounds. The Safe Streets Act was written by lawyers and amended by politicians. True, some of the

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lawyers had been advised by social scientists (on the Crime Commission), but there was very little of a programmatic nature in the act itself.

Social scientists, from what I know, probably played the largest role in the Economic Opportunity Act and the Model Cities program. Several of them, indeed, have published accounts of the development of the policies that define the intellectual component of them. As Professor Daniel P. Moynihan has shown in *Maximum Feasible Misunderstanding,* certain social science theories—notably "opportunity theory"—were taken seriously in the discussions of the community participation feature of the War on Poverty. But, as Moynihan notes, these theories were only one source of the interest in "participation" and other sources—budget officers concerned about coordination, politicians interested in bypassing city halls and local "power structures"—had their own, very different, conceptions of what participation meant. And in the end, "community action" was only one part of the bill, and the most ardent defenders of it—Richard Boone, Paul Ylvisaker—were scarcely social scientists. The Model Cities program was drafted by a task force chaired by Robert Wood, a political scientist, but the initial concept—of a "*demonstration* cities" program, with a frankly experimental tone—was quickly revised by the Johnson White House and a localistic Congress into one involving simply spending a bit more money in scores of cities, provided only that the cities would "plan."

Several things strike me about this record. The first is the great, almost overpowering, importance of the existing governmental and professional groups in shaping policy. School administrators demanded ESEA; social workers fought for the 1962 welfare amendments; HEW bureaucrats and certain hospital administrators, together with the AFL-CIO, created Medicare; Justice Department lawyers drafted the Safe Streets Act; senatorial staffs and their allied activists, together with sympathetic "advocacy journalists," were the determinative influence behind the consumer and ecology laws; the representatives of the Labor Department, HEW, the Budget Bureau, and President Johnson were the architects of the poverty program, with each person struggling to see that his agency's interests were protected.

In short, I am impressed by the extent to which policy making is dominated by the representatives of those bureaucracies and professions having a material stake in the management and funding of the intended policy and by those political staffs who see in a new program a chance for publicity, advancement, and a good reputation for their superiors.

But what of all the social-science consulting, advising, paper writing, and shuttling? Was it mere window dressing, staged by politicians to

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supply legitimacy for their programs? Some of it was, but much of it was sincerely enlisted—*but not to make policy*. Social scientists were enlisted, first of all, to supply ideas. Remarkably few ideas emerged, if my experience is any guide, but they were sought nonetheless. Academics may suppose that thinking of an idea is tantamount to making policy, but experienced officeholders know better. Policy is made by those with power to do so who happen to be there at the crucial time, and that is almost always long after the consultants and advisers have gone home.

Second, social scientists were enlisted to explain puzzles. Why are we having riots? Why is there so much violence? What is wrong with college students? Is pornography bad for you? Why is crime increasing? How do we end "structural unemployment"? These puzzles were, typically, addressed by public commissions created as the consequence of a crisis. Now, it might be said that many of these puzzles are problems precisely because no one knows how to explain them. If you insist that scholars explain the (currently) inexplicable, you will get in response either more questions, or personal ideology, or irrelevant observations. If you insist on these explanations in the crisis-oriented, hurry-up-and-act-yesterday atmosphere of a presidential commission trying to calm a worried nation, you get roughly what you deserve.

Third, social scientists may be asked to discover what works. This is a useful task and is sometimes done quite well. It was not the question put during the 1960s, however—in part because of the Johnsonian belief that anything can be made to work, and in part because to find out what works you must first try something. In the 1960s there was a great desire to try things. In the 1970s (even earlier, in a few cases) we began to learn what does—and does not—work.

I can think of one vastly important exception to these observations. During the 1960s, various economists persuaded a succession of presidents that they knew how to manage the economy by manipulating a few macro-economic variables. This was a genuine case of knowledge becoming power. I leave it to others to decide whether it was a beneficent conquest.

Is, therefore, Robert Nisbet wrong in saying that scholars have much to answer for? Not at all. Although there were some conspicuous exceptions, many of them noted in Professor Moynihan's contribution to this symposium, many scholars who should have known better acquiesced in the process of allowing eager politicians to convert bad ideas into dubious policy—either by participating, very much on the periphery of this process, or by failing to say, loudly and frequently enough, that the emperor had no clothes.

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Whither Integration?

MARTIN KILSON

WRITING AT THE TURN OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY, W. E. B. DuBois argued, in his penetrating essays *The Souls of Black Folks,* that the color line was and would remain the distinguishing feature of American civilization, for only in the United States could color or race be cause for gravely qualifying the status of any group. More acutely than any other figure in Negro life, DuBois recognized that ultra-stigmatization drastically modified American citizenship for Negroes, rendering millions upon millions of them vulnerable in every sphere of their existence: work, schooling, play, voting, associational life, et cetera. Indeed, part of the condition of life as a Negro was that life itself was subject to violation anywhere, at any time, at the hands of anyone, through rigged judicial process, lynching, riot, police brutality. Existence for the Negro, as DuBois correctly perceived it, was by definition dangerous.

Negroes were not, of course, the only group to carry the burden of stigmatization. Others did too—among them Jews, Japanese, Chinese, Germans, Mormons, and Catholics, with this last group risking double jeopardy as Italians, Irish, and Poles. But for all these other groups, given the usual pace of upward mobility and time—usually two generations—the social burden associated with being Italian (wop), Jew (kike), or Chinese (chink) would dissolve, as it has in fact tended to do, more thoroughly than that associated with being Negro (nigger). The consequence of this has been immense. It has meant that the capability for achieving power of these other ethnic groups, especially white groups, is not stymied; they are able to undergo the general process by which social gains are transformed into a true stake in society, and only when this has happened can the burden of pain be laid down and the stigma erased.

The denial of the Negro's quest to convert social gains into social power has been, then, the distinguishing feature of the extreme stigma attached to blacks in white America. The Negro's bid for social power has been seen by whites, until recently, as illegitimate; for the ultra-

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stigmatization of blacks demands that whites view blacks' quest for social power in unnatural and demonic terms. The uniqueness of the Negro's status in this connection is shown by the fact that other ethnic groups had only to contend against the white Protestant majority for a secure place in American life, while at one time or another virtually all white groups—Italians, Poles, Irish, Germans—were united in denying the legitimacy of Negro aspirations. No other group, it seems fair to say, has had to contend against such forces in its claim for reasonable parity in the status of American citizenship. The crowning and crushing blow was left to the Negro's own hands: his self-denigration, often shading off into self-hatred.

Social change for an ethnic group, especially for a racial caste group such as the Negro has been for the better part of American history, depends as much upon unplanned as upon planned processes. Officially stated national ideals have their place—and it is better to have them than not—but they are dubious guides to significant social change. What value they do have is only in connection with other more palpable events, trends, and forces in society. Urbanization and the growth of an industrial economy, for example, have done more to change the map of social life in America than have all the noble declarations uttered by officials at Fourth of July celebrations. Fortunately for the Negro, he was able to take some advantage of those liberating dynamics of modernization, the growth of urban life and the rise of industry.

Historically, Negroes were slow to seize the opportunities provided by city dwelling. By 1910 only one-fifth of the Negro population was urban, as compared to one-half of the white population. This stemmed from the fact that only 10 percent of all Negroes lived outside the South in 1910, and as late as 1940 fewer than 25 percent had left the South. Their mass exodus from the South did not occur until World War II and the postwar era. By 1970 some 52 percent of the Negro population lived in the North.

The occupational map of Negro life changed along with the geographical one. The predominance of farm laborers and domestic workers among Negroes in the prewar period soon gave way, in the postwar years, to a preponderance of unskilled and semiskilled factory workers. By the 1960s slightly more than half of the employed Negro population worked at blue-collar jobs, and by 1970 some 37 percent of black workers had achieved trade union membership—a ratio of unionization greater than the 25 percent of white workers. City dwelling proved particularly favorable to the growth of the black middle classes. Whereas before World War II fewer than 3 percent of the employed Negro population

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held white-collar jobs, by the early 1960s such jobs were held by some 15.3 percent of employed Negro males; and the figure jumped to 22.9 percent a scant decade later, compared with 41.7 percent white-collar jobs for employed white males. At the managerial and higher administrative levels of white-collar work, however, Negro representation has remained small. By the early 1970s Negroes made up only 2 percent of managers in private businesses, 4.5 percent of those in health administration, and 3.7 percent of school administrators. The most impressive figures occur where the federal government has provided opportunities for white-collar employment of blacks. Since 1962, when significant federal government initiatives began, there has been enormous progress in federal employment of blacks: 15 percent of some 300,000 federal jobs were held by blacks in 1972, and 8.9 percent of those jobs were in the top civil service grades.

Along with changes in the geographical and occupational structure of Negro life, advances in education also have been made by Negroes as a group. The median years of schooling for nonwhites (of which Negroes make up the largest single segment) twenty-five years of age and older was 6.9 in 1950, 8.2 in 1960, and 10.3 in 1972, compared with 9.7, 10.9, and 12.3 for whites during the same years. Particularly striking over the past two decades has been the increased enrollment of blacks in institutions of higher education: by 1973 nearly 20 percent of eighteen- and nineteen-year-old blacks were in college, as compared to roughly 35 percent of whites in the same age group.

Both the better jobs available to Negroes and their lengthening years in school have enabled them to begin to bridge the gap in income between themselves and whites. In 1948 the median income for nonwhite families in America stood at $3,071—only 53 percent of the median income for white families, which then stood at $5,762. A slow rise in Negro family income vis-à-vis white family income began in the 1950s, reaching 63 percent of white family income by the middle 1960s and then peaking at 64 percent in 1970. As might be expected, unionized Negro workers closed the income gap between blacks and whites more readily than did nonunionized Negro workers. In 1970 the unionized group also had a higher median income differential over nonunionized Negro workers ($7,732 to $5,906), which compared favorably with the median income differential of unionized white workers and nonunionized whites ($9,285 to $9,478). Moreover, for those Negro families in which husband and wife remain together (about two-thirds have done so) and in which the wife is employed, the family income has advanced steadily from 57 percent of white family income in 1959 to 74 percent in 1971. Further

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progress is apparent among Negro husband-and-wife families under thirty-five years old; in these families income was 82 percent of similarly situated white families and, where both Negro husband and wife worked, 90 percent of the average income of white families in which husband and wife worked.

The foregoing summary of Negro gains in jobs, education, and income indicates how closely the sociological characteristics of blacks have begun to resemble those of whites. To some extent, these changes are in themselves a form of racial integration; for social structure is in part an independent variable, acting alone to effect freedom of choice and action. Indeed, the notion of *social structure as freedom* is a basic feature of the classical (Lockean) version of American liberalism. It is, as Richard Hofstadter remarks in *The Age of Reform,* implicit in virtually every major movement of social reform in the United States since the late nineteenth century. Thus, historically, as different sections of white Americans reduced their disabilities—whether the disabilities were owing simply to social conditions, as with poor whites in the South and rural areas, or to social and ethnic circumstances, as with white immigrants in cities—it is taken for granted that constraints upon one's status or freedom dissolve.

For Negroes, however, another mode of freedom—a second-class one—has obtained. This is why Negroes need to resort to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the National Urban League, the Montgomery Boycott Movement, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, anti-white militancy, black ghetto riots, and other means of influence outside the usual paths of party and electoral politics. These traditional paths were, of course, legally, indeed often coercively, denied Negroes in the South from the 1880s to the 1960s; and outside the South during the same period a combination of de facto segregation and depressed social conditions kept party and electoral politics out of reach of the vast majority of Negroes. Thus, the realization of parity in citizenship for Negroes required a special relationship to government and public policy that no other ethnic group ever even contemplated—namely, the extensive support of the federal government, finally forthcoming in the 1960s, that directly set out to equalize conditions between blacks and whites.

For the first time since Reconstruction, the Kennedy and Johnson administrations of 1961–68 made Negroes an explicit constituency of the federal government. In his famous speech at Howard University in June 1965, Lyndon Johnson put the case straight out. "Thus," he said on that occasion, "it is not enough just to open the gates of opportunity. All our citizens must have the ability to walk through those gates. This is the

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next and more profound stage of the battle for civil rights. We seek not just freedom but opportunity. We seek not just legal equality but human ability, not just equality as a right and a theory *but equality as a fact and equality as a result.*" The way to achieve this result, it was then decided, was through job-skill training programs, aid to dependent children, education grants for minority students, loans to minority businessmen, programs for preschool education. Negroes as a group thus became, during these years, a special constituency of the government.

Although Negroes were not by any means the first such special constituency in American political history, many whites nonetheless considered the blacks' position unprecedented and hence illegitimate. Why? Ideally, such political fostering of special constituencies in American politics is essentially conceived in universalistic as opposed to particularistic terms. Government can foster a social class, a business, an interest group, a functional group, or even an entire region, but fostering a racial, religious, or ethnic group *as such* is considered, to put it gently, bad form. Neither ethnicity nor religion is a foreign element in American political life, but wherever such groups have been treated as a special constituency by government it has generally been done under another, more universalistic guise. Hence Irish Catholic workers, or trade union leaders, or ward leaders, but not Catholic *as such,* can be fostered by government; German dairy farmers, again, can be so fostered, but not Germans *as such.*

Exceptions to this rule have cropped up in the annals of American politics. But these exceptions have invariably been a function of circumstance—of the pressure of possibilities and necessity. Hence the fostering of the Nativists—as anti-Catholic Protestants were then called—by state governments and congressmen who needed their votes in the 1840s and 1850s, a time when Catholics were politically unorganized and thus too weak to fight this exception to the rule. More recently, we have witnessed the fostering of Catholics, Jews, and other white "ethnics" by the Committee to Re-Elect President Nixon in 1972, when the Republican party's quest for a "new majority" was being put into effect.

If, then, one agrees that the government's fostering of Negroes is required in order to achieve parity between blacks and whites, the problem is to find, or fashion, circumstances that will make the special-constituency status of Negroes a legitimate exception to the rule. But this problem soon divides itself into other problems, and the first of these is to determine how the white majority in America truly feels about the fuller integration of blacks into American society.

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According to most indicators, between World War II and the 1970s white attitudes toward blacks changed markedly for the better. True, the change was uneven, often precarious, and usually forthcoming only grudgingly. Yet there has been change. For example, by 1970 only 30 percent of whites, nationwide, opposed the principle of school integration, and only 40 percent of whites in the South opposed it. Most whites also favored the principle of integration in public accommodations, housing, jobs, et cetera. The problem, however, is getting whites to translate agreement on *integration in principle* into *integration in fact.* This is difficult indeed, for most whites refuse to admit that the historical treatment of blacks in terms of racial caste has significantly constrained their access to equality in American life. A Harris poll taken in December 1972 showed that only 40 percent of whites agreed that Negroes were discriminated against in regard to "getting full equality," 38 percent in regard to "the way treated as human beings," 40 percent in regard to "getting skilled labor jobs," 29 percent in regard to "getting quality education in public schools," 40 percent in regard to "getting white-collar jobs," 22 percent in regard to "wages paid," and 51 percent in regard to "getting decent housing"—the last being the only issue on which a majority of white Americans considered blacks distinctly disadvantaged because of race.

The general preference of most whites for including Negroes more fully in American life is also qualified by other crosscutting tendencies besides hesitancy to consider racism an actual constraint upon blacks. For one thing, in presidential elections since 1960—save the 1964 election—the white popular vote has favored the Republican party, the party least likely to initiate public policy innovations beneficial to the needs of Negro Americans. Negroes, on the other hand, have voted overwhelmingly for the Democrats in this period—by no less than 71 percent and by as much as 87 percent. This racial polarization in voting patterns, which has bedeviled efforts to sustain public policy advances for Negroes since 1968, was reinforced in the early 1970s by a conservative trend in white ideological perceptions. Some two-thirds of American voters designated themselves "conservative" in this period, although a Harris poll in January 1976 showed a decline in the "conservative" designation to 43 percent. Furthermore, a study of 600 Jewish voters in New York's 1973 Democratic mayoralty primary, conducted by the Harvard political scientist William Schneider, found the conservative trend rampant among a group that has historically been liberal in racial matters and looked favorably upon public policy innovations. For example, some 62 percent of the Jewish supporters of the conservative

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candidate, Mario Biaggi, believed the city government was doing too much for blacks and minorities; 84 percent supported the militant demonstrations by whites against low-income public housing in the middle-class Forest Hills district; and 90 percent supported the boycotts by Catholic and Jewish parents and pupils of schools slated for integration in the Canarsie school district. Moreover, although 65 percent of the Jews in Schneider's survey were characterized as "liberal" (persons who said they favored more rather than less government activity), some 52 percent of these "liberals" supported the demonstrations against public housing and 51 percent backed the school boycotts.

Clearly, then, there remains a profound discrepancy between, on the one hand, the postwar open-mindedness of a majority of whites toward the principle of integrating blacks into American life and, on the other hand, the transformation of this favorable outlook on racial matters into concrete changes in housing, schools, and jobs. This discrepancy plays havoc with all efforts of federal public policy to sustain racial change in these basic spheres of American life. Moreover, the precarious position of public policy in racial matters since 1968 is reinforced by a widespread alienation of voters toward government, with only 15 percent of the population currently believing that the federal government "does the best job." To alienation is joined apathy: recent reports have it that more than 50 percent of American voters will stay home for the 1976 presidential election.

All of this, in turn, has fostered further development and cohesion in the neoconservative movement that has arisen in intellectual circles in recent years and has strengthened the new mood of distrust toward government, especially the role of government in public policy innovation. Deriving force and focus from Robert Nisbet's *The Twilight of Authority* and from the writings of Irving Kristol, James Q. Wilson, Nathan Glazer, and Michael Novak, among others, this movement's message is clear, and clearly traditional in its major premises. The good life for Americans, it holds, is to be found in greater recourse to localism, voluntarism, and the restoration of old-fashioned values—familial, sexual, religious, economic, political, and (last but certainly not least) ethnic. In part as a reaction to the excesses that characterized social changes in the 1960s, the neoconservatives are more potent on the attack than in putting forth a positive vision of a better society. But they have been astonishingly successful in getting their message across, and the implications of their success do not bode well for the realization of racial integration.

Yet, on the more sanguine side, Negroes over the past two decades

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made serious political advances along with real economic and educational gains. Increases in the number of registered voters, actual voting, candidacies, and elected officials among Negroes have been nothing less than astonishing. For example, the registration of voting-age Negroes in the South increased from 5 percent in 1940 to 43 percent in 1964 and stands at 65 percent today. The character of Negro political leadership has likewise changed—from the civil rights leaders of the 1950s and early 1960s, whose influence has been largely moral, to a sizable class of elected black officials, whose influence rests upon institutionalized authority. These latter numbered less than 100 in 1960 but stand at roughly 4,000 today, constituting about 1 percent of all elected officials in America. And of course the total number of Negroes in politics is much larger than this (perhaps five times larger), for one must include in their ranks the thousands of Negroes recently appointed to political office. At the top of the list of appointed black politicians have been the first two Negro members of a federal cabinet—Dr. Robert Weaver, secretary of Housing and Urban Development under President Johnson, and William Coleman, secretary of Transportation under President Ford. It need hardly be added that these political advances have been made possible by the increasingly favorable attitude of whites in the postwar era toward including blacks in American life. White attitudes now favor even the election of a Negro vice-president and president—at least in polls some 76 percent of white voters have responded positively to this issue.

The euphoria over these heady gains, however, has now receded—as has much of the anti-white, pro-black militancy that energized the millions of Negroes who helped to bring these advances about. In a word, the war is now over and the long, drab peace, with its concern about nuts-and-bolts American politics, has returned, but with this difference: the presence of Negroes at all levels of politics has now been institutionalized.

The question now is: To what use will these political gains be put? In the era in which we now live Negro political success will require highly imaginative leadership, for the substance of success will itself require a new phase of public policy innovation. No small task, this, since the national mood of the moment is at best skeptical and at worst implacably opposed to greater policy intervention in racial matters. Nonetheless, there are opportunities that might be favorably exploited by blacks and their new political leadership.

Taking the long view, however, the issue at the top of the political agenda for blacks is that of deploying black votes more carefully between the Democratic and Republican parties. The United States ap-

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pears to be in an era of keenly contested presidential elections, tight races whose outcome figures to be close, with neither party likely to hold the White House for more than two consecutive terms. In this situation blacks cannot afford to nestle too comfortably in the embrace of one party (the Democratic) to the exclusion of the other (the Republican). The reason for this should be sufficiently clear: blacks have depended, and will continue to depend for a good while longer, upon government for the maintenance and extension of what gains they have made thus far in achieving parity with whites.

Negro voting must be intelligently diversified not only between the two major political parties but between black and white candidates. Throughout most of the 1960s a highly unified Negro voting bloc made much good sense; that was when large numbers of Negro candidacies first occurred and when the ability of Negro politicians to win office was still in doubt. But this situation no longer obtains, and other more varied uses for the vote are now in order. Opportunities here are plentiful. Nearly seventy congressional districts, for example, have a Negro voting-age population that comprises at least 25 percent of the total voting population. In such districts blacks would be remiss not to educate white politicians to their special needs. In some such districts this is already well under way. A prominent instance is that of Congressman Peter Rodino, the fourth-term incumbent of New Jersey's Eleventh Congressional District. A liberal best known for his leadership in the congressional hearings on the impeachment of Richard Nixon, Rodino has a constituency that includes the city of Newark, and 37 percent of his voters are black.

An important part of the task of informing white voters of the needs of blacks must be performed by those black politicians who have been able to win elections, through style and skill, in districts where the black vote is only minimal. The number of such Negro politicians is increasing, aided in part by the migration of blacks of all social classes to white suburbs and to smaller towns on the metropolitan fringe. (Four million Negroes now live in such suburbs and towns, as opposed to two million twenty years ago.) Senator Edward Brooke was the first Negro politician who owed his office to predominantly white voters, but there are others. In 1970 in California—the home state of Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan—Wilson Riles, a Negro, was elected to the important office of superintendent of public instruction, defeating Max Rafferty, the conservative incumbent who ran a campaign emphasizing law and order. In 1973 Thomas Bradley, a Negro lawyer and former policeman, defeated another conservative white incumbent, Samuel Yorty, for the mayoralty

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of Los Angeles, a city whose Negro population is 12 percent. Moreover, California and Colorado both have Negro lieutenant-governors, both elected in 1974, the same year Wilson Riles was reelected California's *superintendent of public instruction by a landslide.*

Integration, in the wider sense in which I have been discussing it here, is measurable by more than indicators of social change. Cultural phenomena weigh heavily as well. Many of the important cultural tendencies that are pertinent for racial integration had their origins in the counter-culture and new styles of life that developed in the 1960s. New cultural patterns and images related to racial matters—particularly in the spheres of cross-ethnic marriage, popular culture, and the mass media—are now available to young Americans, enabling fundamental change in the character of American society.

The growth of cross-ethnic marriages, including interracial marriages, has been extraordinary. Until the 1960s, most ethnic and religious groups could still boast extremely high rates of endogamous marriage among their members. Jews, for example, in the early 1960s recorded endogamous marriages in the 90 percent range. Since 1965, however, between 30 and 46 percent of all Jewish marriages have been to gentiles—one of the highest rates of exogamous marriage recorded today, and this despite the efforts of Jewish organizations to reverse the trend. A similar situation exists among other groups. In 1974, to cite another instance, nearly 40 percent of Japanese-American men married white American women. This is ironic when one considers the enormous press that ethnic pride and anti-melting-pot feelings have received in America in recent years.

More to the point of racial integration, among Negroes between 1960 and 1970 there were 64,789 black-white marriages—a 26 percent increase over the previous decade. Moreover, in the decade 1950–60 there were for the first time slightly more white male–black female marriages—25,913 of them, a margin of 417 over black male–white female marriages. Although marriages of this character declined in 1960–70, doubtless owing to the rise of virulent black militancy and the polarization of racial feeling that it brought in its wake, such marriages, and interracial marriages in general, are expected to increase markedly in the current decade. Experts agree that white male–black female marriages are an important index of fundamental change in the historical pattern of racial-caste labeling in America, and hence of the ultra-stigmatization under which Negroes have lived.

Less easy to generalize about, but more pervasive, has been the

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increased presence of the Negro in popular culture, and in a new and different perspective. Rock music, for example, is the first successful mode of mass music—played and listened to by millions of white kids of all classes and ethnic groups and in all regions of the country—to contain a distinctly Negro cultural motif, albeit of lower-class Negro origin. Fundamental to what might be termed the *Negroness* of rock music is an expansive sense of abandon toward sensuality and sexual behavior, and, for better or worse, the sensual perception of white youth is increasingly shaped by this. Furthermore, although some white practitioners of rock music employ "white-rock" styles, most of them use "black-rock" styles—assimilating Negro speech modes and voice-tonal aesthetics with surprising degrees of authenticity. No other generation of white popular musical artists, however much their music was earlier shaped by Negro forms, has shown the same degree of deference to Negroness. This new and unprecedented cultural diffusion between blacks and whites at least supports racial-caste dissolution; for if more whites—the young in particular—consider the Negro and his ethnicity an increasingly valid source of their own style, they might also begin to consider the Negro a legitimate member of American society.

In the media—television, textbooks, magazines, the press, movies—the old degrading image of the Negro as a superstitious, maniacally smiling, lazy coon that for so long dominated the view of the Negro in popular culture is just about dead. Television in particular has helped to effect this change. Millions of white families now see on their TV screens richly variegated portrayals of blacks in American life. For example, it would have been inconceivable to the early viewers of television after World War II that a generation later Negro models would be seen on television advertising products for highly personal use, such as cosmetics. It would of course be foolish to infer from this turnabout in the popular projection of the Negro that a radical change has occurred in the character of American race relations; yet it would be equally foolish to conclude that it is of no consequence whatever, save in the marketing of products in a capitalist economy. Indeed it is precisely because capitalism has endorsed this dramatic change in the popular image of blacks that I would expect its impact to be significant. Few things in American civilization succeed as thoroughly as capitalist-linked success, and however much one may bemoan this feature of our culture, it is a powerful institutionalizing force.

Over a generation ago, Gunnar Myrdal argued that the resolution of the "American Dilemma"—the nonfreedom of racial caste in a society

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whose primary premise was freedom itself—would occur when the American creed of equal opportunity for all individuals was extended to blacks and whites alike. Thus far the resolution of that dilemma, while well under way, has remained only partial. And it will continue to be so, Myrdal believes, until whites face up to the moral cowardice that lies at the heart of it.

Certainly the split personality, aided and abetted by moral confusion, that the average white displays in the process of extending the American creed is a continuing obstacle to racial integration. For example, in the area of sports—where Negroes now have a preponderant role after their fitful entry in the late 1940s and early 1950s—one finds much moral ambivalence in racial matters. Consider the city of Boston, where Irish youth cheer on the Celtics' Jojo White or Charlie Scott at the Boston Garden, or Jim Rice of the Red Sox at Fenway Park, but the next day shout "dirty nigger" at black children being bused into formerly white schools. Fortunately, most Negro leaders today are quite capable of open-mindedness toward this kind of ambivalence in the racial perceptions of the average white, who might be willing to change in one sphere of cultural and social life but in other spheres remains constrained by past habits and current anxieties.

Another and less sympathetic response by Negro leaders is warranted, however, in regard to the neoconservative white intellectuals and publicists whose current arguments regarding racial integration amount to adding insult to injury. These neoconservatives would have us believe that the American creed would have shed its white-only status quite of its own accord—without the pressure of the civil rights movement, the general cultural shifts of the 1960s, and the public policy initiatives of the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. The latter in particular come in for the loudest criticism from the neoconservatives. They condemn any role for government in racial integration beyond that of night watchman. Such transgression, they claim, can only produce bureaucratic excesses and profound distortions of the traditional American values of individual achievement—values that white ethnic groups like Jews, Irish, Slavs, and Italians presumably have assimilated. Nathan Glazer's book *Affirmative Discrimination* propounds this thesis; it is sharply critical of affirmative action in hiring policies for blacks, women, and Spanish-speaking citizens.

This neoconservative attack on racial integration—and it is, in the final analysis, nothing less—is riddled through with unexamined assumptions. For one thing, the white ethnics' experience with upward mobility did not entail any special deference to individualism, insofar as

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individualism led them to reject assistance from government. Jews, Italians, Irish, Slavs, Greeks, and other white ethnic groups exploited every conceivable opportunity, including extensive corruption, to bring government—the public purse and public authority—into the balance, providing capital for construction firms and new technological industries, city and state colleges and technical institutes, educational grants and loans, among other government benefits. Furthermore, for Irish Americans the evidence is pretty clear that the rise of their middle classes from the late nineteenth century onward depended more heavily upon public jobs and government resources than did that of any other ethnic group.

The neoconservatives' argument that government's role in racial integration has generated unprecedented bureaucratic excesses is scarcely more credible. Certainly there has been much mismanagement in HEW, EEOC, and other federal agencies concerned with racial integration, but for American political processes this is pretty much par for the course. There was no less bureaucratic disorder in the past when government was used in aiding claimant sectors of society, whether claimant capitalists in Grant's era, claimant white ethnic working classes from the 1890s onward, claimant farmers in Wilson's era and in the post–World War II era of parity prices and soil banks, or claimant Negroes of the Kennedy-Johnson era. The neoconservatives' criticisms of government support for racial integration strangely ignore the fact that American political culture, in its extraordinary innovativeness, has usually been able to legitimize the bureaucratic excesses attending government's role in social mobility. It is curious that the neoconservatives display a loss of faith in government and public policy precisely when these are being employed in behalf of Negroes.

It is equally curious that the neoconservatives, despite their claim to realism, have paid little attention to what underlies the fears of white ethnics in regard to federal support of racial integration: the economics of scarcity under which the United States has been living since the end of the Vietnam War. In particular, much of the bad feeling that has of late accompanied the affirmative action program is not racial or sexual but economic. In testimony before the House Special Subcommittee on Education, Norman Hill and Bayard Rustin made precisely this point:

> We believe that there is a direct relationship between the economic failures of the past five years and the problems which the affirmative action program has encountered. It seems painfully obvious that an affirmative action program cannot achieve its objectives peacefully and democratically if it must function within the context of scarcity. And we are particularly dismayed by the notion

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that opportunities can be expanded for some groups at a time when the job market is shrinking for all. You simply cannot elevate significant numbers of Blacks or women into better-paying, higher-skilled and more satisfying jobs if those jobs don't exist.

Which brings us back again to the need for innovative public policy—a policy that will give all who have been held down a chance for a leg up without knocking down those who have already attained significant upward mobility.

Finally, it has to be understood that integration is not a matter of interest exclusively to Negroes. The best of our leaders, black and white, have always understood it in a wider context—as a necessity for the nation at large. "I have a dream," announced Martin Luther King, Jr., before he was brought down, and that dream, as he elaborated upon it, was not for Negroes alone but for every American. It was a dream of a society without hunger and without meanness, a society in which everyone could live his life to the best of his God-given limitations. That dream has seemed to fade in recent years. Ironically, in this, our bicentennial year, it has not been called forth as one might have expected it to have been. It remains the best dream we have, and the truest American vision.

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You Who Swim

JOHN UPDIKE

You who in water move as one
long rounded to this use, a stone
that gently fails to sink, you tint
as wind tints air this element.

Androgynous, your round face shorn
by bathing-cap, you feign to drown.
"The dead man's float," you say and smile,
your lashes wet and animal.

Soft teacher, otter, other, moth
to the sunk sun, you play at death;
the surface glitter slips, and air
slices your throat with shards of glare.

At night you rise beside me, face
wet with the dark, your dim lips spaced
to hold the bubble love; your eyes
are shut; we swim our dead men's lives.

● JOHN UPDIKE is well known for his novels, poetry, and criticism. His latest book, *Picked-Up Pieces*, is a collection of essays.

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Dutch

Daniel Mark Epstein

Dutch in the wire cage, burning away with electrified stylus
or working the dye in slow along the pinpricks
a handful of flesh at a time. High musk
of burnt flesh like the back street meat markets.
He is some kind of artist.

My mother thought otherwise, jerking coke at the bar;
six months out of the flatlands
she married into this garden of earthly delights:
the ninth street shooting gallery, peep show carnival
and Dutch the tattooist,
a living advertisement of his own genius
and the skill of his masters,
not a square foot of unadorned flesh on his whole body.

She would lead the drunk boys out by the elbow,
whispering "this is no way to prove yourself a man,"
recalling her uncle Mack raving drunk
clawing at vein-blue snakes drawn up his arms,
or a tale her sailor father told
of a Swedish boy shy of the needle,
who dreamed his fear out loud
and woke tangled in the ship's hammock,
twisted in a nightmare and the crew knew it.
And how they pitched in to get the young Swede drunk
and strapped him to the mess table
and hired a French tattooist
aboard with his packet of needles and rare dyes.
He worked a great clipper ship on the boy's chest
with full rigging
where wind would catch full in the sails when the blood cleared.

My mother would lead them away from the wire cage

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while her father-in-law shouted to his son from the cash register:
"You bring a *shiksa* into a place of business . . ."
and mother:
"What kind of a Jew grows rich
from writing on a man's body?
Your laws cry out against it."
And the old man again:
"We are not Gods to make our laws for other men."

I write on your clean skin, my people
and then dream the world will see you as you were made.

DANIEL MARK EPSTEIN's newest book of poems, *The Follies*, will be published in the spring of next year.

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Skeptics and Believers

The Science-Humanities Debate

WILLIAM NICHOLS

The tone of tentative inquiry, which befits a being of dim faculties and bounded knowledge, is the tone I would wish to take and not to depart from.
Matthew Arnold, "Literature and Science"

A FEW YEARS AGO I WAS RENDERED NEARLY APOPLECTIC in a seminar, and I have just begun to understand what happened. Several faculty members at Denison University were engaged in an interdisciplinary study group on cosmology, and we were talking one day about what the Apollo program might tell us of the origin of the moon and, ultimately, the history of the universe. During a lull in the discussion, I suggested that it might be worthwhile to spend one session investigating the political and military dimensions of the space program, as a way of looking at the complex blend of pure and applied research that seems to characterize much of contemporary science and technology. With not even a hint of rancor, the physicist who led our seminar said he would not participate in such a discussion. Such issues, he said, did not interest him at all. The substance of my reply I have blessedly repressed, but I know it failed to convey a tenth of my rage, and it surely conveyed little else. I recall that we went on, with only the briefest hesitation, to study cosmology in ways the physicist found acceptable.

That relatively inconsequential exchange was an aborted part of a tradition, I now believe, in which the seemingly peripheral issue of tone has been surprisingly important. A good place to begin to trace the tradition is with Thomas Carlyle's essay "Signs of the Times" (1829) and Timothy Walker's answering "Defence of Mechanical Philosophy," which appeared in the *North American Review* (1831). Carlyle's essay is a prophetic statement about the impact of technology on modern life, but

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most nineteenth-century readers probably found Walker's rebuttal the more reasonable view of technology and the future. The tone of Carlyle's essay belies the essential cogency of his argument, and Walker's manner conveys a tranquil certitude that is very persuasive. Moreover, when the exchange between Carlyle and Walker is viewed as an early version of the modern science-and-humanities debate, it seems clear that many participants have since fallen into the same tonal pattern.

To focus on the tone or manner of this debate may seem willfully superficial, but I think it offers a way to clarify the nature of a disturbing failure in human discourse. Given the problems I will describe, it might seem more appropriate to ask if the premises held by those who participate in this debate allow any possibility of resolution. Is the debate really an epistemological dead end? I want to beg that question and argue simply that the debate must proceed if our intellectual life is to have any meaning at all. Consequently, we must attend carefully to the quality of our discourse regarding science, technology, and human values.

At the heart of the debate are well-known questions regarding the role science and technology have played, and should play, in human affairs. Should the techniques, the tools, and discoveries of science and technology be used ever more widely and exclusively in our attempts to understand and overcome human problems? (There are obvious dangers in lumping science and technology together, as I have done in parts of this essay; but the distinction is often arbitrary. The physicist mentioned above intended to limit our discussion of the Apollo program to "pure science"; but in that case the decision to do research was obviously linked to a whole series of judgments about the *use* we should make of our knowledge and tools.) What limits, if any, should we place on technological and industrial research and development? On the basis of what values other than the advancement of knowledge are we to discriminate among possible directions for technical development and scientific education? It is difficult to characterize briefly and fairly the opposing sides in the debate. They have tended to view each other as Luddites and positivists. Here let *Skeptics* refer to those who, like Carlyle, take the position that science and technology have brought us something considerably less promising than unalloyed human progress and that we must become increasingly discriminating in our assessment of their impact on our lives. And let *Believers* refer to those who, like Walker, claim that increasingly complex advances in science and technology offer mankind's primary hope for the future. There are many Skeptics, in my terms, among scientists and social scientists, and there are growing numbers of Believers among professionals in the humanities. My labels,

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then, go beyond the "two cultures," as C. P. Snow defined them—although we must return, briefly, to the Snow-Leavis controversy—and they underline an irony implicit in the tone of this crucially important debate.

The irony is evident in Walker's "Defence of Mechanical Philosophy." Carlyle had argued that the most important danger in the growth of technology was society's tendency to make of the machine an abstract and rigid ideal that might severely limit our intellectual, emotional, and spiritual life. On the face of it, this is not an outrageous warning; there is evidence in the history of education and in manufacturing, for instance, to suggest that we can be seduced by the neatness and efficiency of mechanical techniques into taking a very narrow view of human possibility. When Walker's mildly stated premise is placed beside Carlyle's warning, the "Defence of Mechanical Philosophy" appears to be rooted in powerful, unquestioning faith. "We do entertain an unfaltering belief," Walker says near the end of his essay, "in the permanent and continued improvement of the human race, and we consider no small portion of it, whether in relation to the body or the mind, as the result of mechanical invention." In fact, Walker's final paragraph makes it quite clear that his faith in human progress is based on his faith in a beneficent Providence who will "make known through gifted men, as fast as the world is prepared to receive them, new truths from his exhaustless store."

But significantly, when the Carlyle-Walker exchange is viewed as a part of the traditional Skeptic-Believer debate, Walker seems coolly, systematically rational and Carlyle's voice, in contrast, sounds shrill and angry. Walker knows how to emphasize Carlyle's emotion-laden language, and there is a devastating paragraph in his "Defence" that brings together several of Carlyle's most strident charges against the mechanistic thinking of his time. Without doing great violence to the essential argument of "Signs of the Times," Walker's long paragraph so compresses Carlyle's attack on the mechanistic impulses of philosophical, economic, and scientific thought in the nineteenth century that Carlyle's anger sounds almost pathological. The contrast between Walker's tone and Carlyle's is evident in the first few lines of Walker's paragraph:

> On the whole, we have no wish to disguise the feeling of strong dissatisfaction, excited in us, by the article under consideration. We consider its tendency injurious, and its reasoning unsound. That it has some eloquent passages must be admitted, but . . . we hear distinguished philosophers spoken of as "logic-mills,"—the religion of the age as "a working for wages,"—our Bible societies as "supported by fomenting of vanities, by puffing, intrigue, and chicane,"—

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and all descriptions of men "from the cartwright up to the code-maker," as mere "mechanists." . . .

Walker calls attention to his own strong feelings in the matter, but in doing so he offers an implicit contrast: his very candor and his manner suggest confidence and control, an objectivity which throws into relief the enormous anger that surges through the language he is about to quote from Carlyle. It is not necessary to stress Walker's calculation here; the contrast would have been apparent without his underlining it.

Another version of this debate, rather different in emphasis, occurred recently between a British writer-physician, Dannie Abse, and an American psychologist, Stanley Milgram. In the 1960s Abse read a paper by Milgram that reported on his now rather well-known obedience experiments at Yale University. Abse then wrote a play, *The Dogs of Pavlov,* which posed a number of critical questions about such research, although it did not actually reenact Milgram's Yale experiments. Asked to write an introductory essay when his play was published in 1973, Abse provided some background about the genesis of *The Dogs of Pavlov* and some very direct criticism of Milgram's basic experiment. "In my view," he said, among other things, "it is dubious whether his simple but brilliant and terrible experiment should have been carried out." Abse offered Milgram the opportunity to respond, and the published version of the play includes two letters from Milgram, one reacting to Abse's introductory essay, the other commenting briefly on the play itself.

Milgram's work on obedience in the early 1960s included many experimental variations, but a summary of the basic experiment provides adequate background for understanding the Abse-Milgram exchange. It offers, in addition, a concrete example of the context in which the debate occurs in our time. The experiment began when a person answering an advertisement—"WE WILL PAY $4.00 FOR ONE HOUR OF YOUR TIME"—arrived at a laboratory to participate in what was explained as a study in memory and learning. After brief preliminaries, the individual discovered that he would function as teacher in the experiment, as distinguished from the experimenter, who assumed the role of authority, and the learner. The teacher, who was really the subject of the experiment, then assisted the experimenter in strapping the learner's arms to a chair. The teacher-subject and experimenter moved into another room, where the teacher was given charge of a "shock generator," which included a battery of 30 switches that were said to move in 15-volt increments from 15 to 450 volts. The teacher was instructed to

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administer a learning test to the person in the other room, giving the learner a shock each time he answered incorrectly and increasing the voltage with each wrong answer. But the teacher was not actually giving shocks at all. The learner was an actor, trained to give incorrect answers, register pain, and ultimately to refuse to participate in a way calculated to make the teacher-subject believe he might be injuring, perhaps even killing, the learner.

The central question in each performance of the experiment was this: When would the teacher-subject rebel against authority and refuse to administer more shocks? With the experimenter giving strong admonitions to continue, and assurances of "no permanent tissue damage," 65 percent of the teachers never disobeyed. But the obedient teachers were apparently subject to enormous stress. In a 1963 report on the experiment, Milgram said: "In a large number of cases the degree of tension reached extremes that are rarely seen in sociopsychological laboratory studies. Subjects were observed to sweat, tremble, stutter, bite their lips, groan, and dig their fingernails into their flesh. These were characteristic rather than exceptional responses to the experiment."

Abse's criticism of the Milgram experiment was not the first. As early as 1964, Diana Baumrind wrote a brief article for *American Psychologist* in which she expressed concern for the well-being of Milgram's subjects and doubt about the significance of his results. "I would not like to see experiments such as Milgram's proceed," Baumrind concluded, "unless the subjects were fully informed of the dangers of serious after effects and his corrections were clearly shown to be effective in restoring their state of well-being." Baumrind apparently believed the experiments could be made both humane and conclusive with some revision. Milgram's response to Baumrind in a later issue of *American Psychologist* conveys mild anger. He is disappointed that she made the criticisms without more information about the experiments, and he challenges the logic of her brief essay. Milgram closes his rebuttal with some reflections on the apparent split in American psychology between healing and research. There should be no such schism, he says:

> The psychologist intent on healing knows that his power to help rests on knowledge; he is aware that a scientific grasp of all aspects of life is essential for his work, and is itself a worthy human aspiration. At the same time, the laboratory psychologist senses his work will lead to human betterment, not only because enlightenment is more dignified than ignorance, but because new knowledge is pregnant with humane consequences.

This is the language of belief, comparable with Timothy Walker's con-

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cluding paragraphs; and it carries a trace of sanctimony because Milgram affirms something Baumrind never denied—the humane consequences of scientific knowledge. But this is not yet the full-blown Skeptic-Believer debate because Baumrind suggests only technical revisions and Milgram accepts her challenge as essentially rational, if mistaken.

Our debate is fully joined in Abse's introduction to *The Dogs of Pavlov* and Milgram's response. Having read the Milgram-Baumrind exchange, Abse distinguishes his own position:

> I would go further than Professor Baumrind because I for one, even if I was certain that post-experimental reparation were 100 per cent effective in 100 per cent of the subjects, would still feel most uneasy about the Yale experiments—as I would feel about any experiment based on a hoax, that causes men to lose their dignity, to twitch, to suffer seizures, to reach the point of almost nervous collapse. How can such experiments be happily sanctioned by an informed public though carefully conducted, though supervised by men of impeccable morals, though performed for the most idealistic of reasons?

Elsewhere in his essay, Abse suggests that human history teaches precisely what Milgram claims to have learned from his experiments—that people have a frightening capacity to hurt each other in brutal deference to authority. This is not "new knowledge" at all, Abse suggests. The point of his criticism, then, is ultimately to reject Milgram's experiments as wrong and unnecessary. They may have done psychological damage to individuals in the service of knowledge already available, at least in its basic outlines.

That Abse's rejection of the Yale experiments brings the debate into the same arena as the Carlyle-Walker exchange is evident in the tone of Milgram's first response to Abse:

> Since I have argued the ethics of the experiment at length elsewhere, there is little purpose in restating my position. I do feel you are excessively harsh in your language when condemning my use of illusion in the experiment, choosing such opprobrious terms as "bullshit," "cheated," and "fraud." As a dramatist you surely understand that illusion may serve a revelatory function, and indeed, the very possibility of theater is founded on the benign use of contrivance.

Milgram goes on, in fact, to argue the ethics of the experiments. They were good, he claims, because the subjects found their experience entirely acceptable. But the apparent aside on manners and illusion which I have quoted is really the heart of the rebuttal. Milgram casts himself as defender of rational discourse, and he achieves a compelling measure of

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detachment when he lectures Abse about his own craft. Like Carlyle, Abse has left himself open to such a rebuttal because there is powerful outrage at work in his language. If one accepts the implicit assumption that such anger is necessarily in conflict with rational discourse, then it is hardly necessary for Milgram to confront the substance of Abse's criticism.

My intention is not to suggest that Abse's essay is wildly irrational or that Milgram's response is evasive. I consider Abse's essay a powerful, passionately intelligent effort to deal with some very difficult questions; and although Milgram's letter is not as fully developed as his response to Baumrind, I think it is honest and serious. But Milgram does not really engage the burden of Abse's concern; he sounds complacent about the basic questions that are crucial to this whole debate. That Milgram is *not* complacent about such questions is clear in his other writings. My point is that in this exchange between a Skeptic and a Believer, where we might hope for a truly creative dialectic, there is finally no real engagement. It is as though a guest at a dinner party raised a significant question using taboo language, obscene gestures, or very aggressive intonations, and the company simply refused to acknowledge that anything of substance had been said.

A partial explanation for this failure may be suggested by Thomas S. Kuhn's fascinating study, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Kuhn discusses the strong epistemological confidence that seems to be necessary in the day-to-day functioning of the scientific community: "Normal science, the activity in which most scientists inevitably spend almost their whole time, is predicated on the assumption that the scientific community knows what the world is like. Much of the success of the enterprise derives from the community's willingness to defend that assumption, if necessary at considerable cost." What *seems* to be implied in the skepticism of a Carlyle or an Abse is that the scientific community, or some branch of it, does not know nearly enough about the world. When that kind of assertion is made within the scientific community—especially when it is based on a view of the world generally thought to be outmoded—the response, Kuhn says, is not so much to debate the alternative, but to ignore it. "There are always some men who cling to one or another of the older views, and they are simply read out of the profession, which thereafter ignores their work." If the Skeptic is understood to argue from a position that rejects the accepted models or patterns of contemporary science, then the established methods of discourse within the scientific community would seem to rule out the possibility of real debate. In that case, even the *appearance* of a continuing

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debate between Skeptics and Believers may be a minor miracle.

Still, it is important to acknowledge a troubling tendency on the part of the Skeptics to engage in just the sort of bad-tempered, even ad hominem, arguments that can be too lightly dismissed as lacking in substance and logic. It is worth looking once again at perhaps the most bad tempered of all the contributions to this debate that are in print—F. R. Leavis's response to C. P. Snow's 1959 Rede Lecture, "The Two Cultures."

To look back at the Snow-Leavis controversy is to be struck by the exaggerated contrast in tone. Snow's lecture begins with a casual and insistent modesty. Having mentioned his earlier essay on the lack of communication between scientists and literary intellectuals, he proceeds:

> It was a problem I could not avoid just because of the circumstances of my life. The only credentials I had to ruminate on the subject at all came through those circumstances, through nothing more than a set of chances. Anyone with similar experience would have seen much the same things and I think made very much the same comments about them. It just happened to be an unusual experience. By training I was a scientist: by vocation I was a writer. That was all. It was a piece of luck, if you like, that arose through coming from a poor home.
>
> But my personal history isn't the point now.

One can hardly dismiss this as false modesty. Snow is, at one level, suggesting with some diffidence that his own childhood poverty, his education, and his work as a writer led him inevitably to consider the problems he is about to discuss. He makes no claims for special imaginative insight. Nevertheless, Snow's brief autobiographical introduction does imply that he has bridged the cultural gap which, he is about to argue, threatens the intellectual life of industrialized nations and the future well-being of developing nations.

Leavis's response begins with ad hominem arguments, and his barrage of brilliant invective steals the show from his larger points about science, literature, and culture. Actually, the core of Leavis's argument is, at the very least, defensible. He maintains that Snow's analysis is too simple, that despite paying tribute to "the traditional culture," Snow ultimately views scientists and technologists as the potential saviors of mankind and urges educators to train more of them more rapidly. "The upshot," Leavis says, "is that if you insist on the need for any other kind of concern, entailing forethought, action and provision, about the human future—any other kind of misgiving—than that which talks in terms of

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productivity, material standards of living, hygienic and technological progress, then you are a Luddite."

Leavis's basic premise seems incontrovertible, and all Skeptics make it in one way or another: we must take into account a whole range of human problems and possibilities that have been ignored in the development of science and technology. Why, when debate is joined with those who cannot accept that premise, do the Skeptics so often indulge themselves in a kind of rage that seems inevitably to damage their credibility? My tentative beginning at an answer leads back to my own inarticulate rage when my colleague refused to discuss the political and military dimensions of the space program.

In that discussion I felt briefly what a helpless paranoiac must feel. It was as though I had just shared my most terrifying delusion with a smiling, detached clinician and had failed to alter even the smile on his face. It seems to me that what haunts the language of Carlyle, Abse, and Leavis is at least a small bubble of terror, the thought that what they have to say may be dismissed as wild delusion in a world seemingly dominated by an orderly, mechanistic view of man. Perhaps it is this fear that lends a frenzied, moralistic tone to much of what the Skeptics say about science and technology.

But not all versions of the debate have been marked by the tonal lapse I have described. The classic example of a Skeptic at work with poise and control is Matthew Arnold in "Literature and Science," one of the three lectures he delivered during his American tour of 1883–84. If Arnold's adoption of a "tone of tentative inquiry" is self-conscious, it is also much more than good manners. His respect for Thomas Henry Huxley, whose argument for the primacy of science education, "Science and Culture" (1880), he was answering, is implicit in the essay, but even more important is his confident belief in the value of the humanities. Arnold acknowledges the enormous impact on human life of what Milgram calls "new knowledge," the results of scientific inquiry. But in a world so radically altered by "the power of intellect and knowledge," Arnold insists that the moral and aesthetic questions at the heart of the humanities take on added significance: "The need of humane letters, as they are truly called, because they serve the paramount desire in men that good shall be ever present to them—the need of humane letters, to establish a relation between the new conceptions, and our instinct for beauty, our instinct for conduct, is only the more visible." When Skeptics have lost control of language in this vitally important debate, it may be, in part, a sign of our diminished faith in the significance of the humanities.

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Lionel Trilling, who participated in this debate with as much dignity and insight as any modern Skeptic, offered in his 1972 Jefferson Lecture in the Humanities another reason for the difficulty we have in attaining poise and control in contemporary versions of the debate. Modern education, Trilling said, has been less and less able to give any but the most talented and professionally committed students a genuine understanding of current developments in mathematics and science.

> This exclusion of most of us from the mode of thought which is habitually said to be the characteristic achievement of the modern age is bound to be experienced as a wound given to our intellectual self-esteem. About this humiliation we all agree to be silent, but can we doubt that it has its consequences, that it introduces into the life of mind a significant element of dubiety and alienation which must be taken into account in any estimate that is made of the present fortunes of mind?

One of the consequences of such a wound may well be the Skeptics' tonal lapse. Anger and the end of discourse are perhaps more seductively appealing than we generally acknowledge if we are haunted by the fear that continued debate will expose some decisive and humiliating ignorance. Related to that may be one more source of the fear and anger that mar the discourse of our Skeptics—a reluctant, unacknowledged belief in the near omnipotence of science and technology. And that is a belief which, ironically, few scientists in our time share.

Whatever the causes, and they are undoubtedly complicated, the uncontrolled rage that sometimes weakens serious attempts to discuss critically the human impact of science and technology goes well beyond the ambivalence most of us feel when we consider our increasing dependence on complex mechanisms and intricate technical systems. That ambivalence is surely an inevitable, even a healthy, part of contemporary life. But our anger is simpler and more dangerous. What we must guard against, I think, is surrendering to it and to a dark Byronic vision of ourselves as cut off by the power of science and technology from all that influences the quality of our external world. Beyond anger, such a vision seems likely to offer only self-fulfilling prophecy; it will render moral and aesthetic questions just as irrelevant to our collective life as Carlyle feared. The anger, I still believe, is often justified, but the responsibility of Skeptics now is to understand the anger and move past it to continue the debate in all the rich complexity we can sustain.

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The Lure of the Primitive

GEORGE WOODCOCK

THREE YEARS AGO, when I was gathering material for a series of documentary films, I spent several months in remote Pacific islands where a variety of indigenous cultures were undergoing the attacks of modern progress. They had survived missionaries and blackbirders, traders and imperial administrators. The final frontal assault of organized tourism seemed to be destroying them, but only because of an ironic development perceptible throughout the Third World. In that world, people whom we used to describe as primitive are, in their eagerness for the fruits of modern technology, discarding the arts, beliefs, and customs of their past; those who hold out for tradition are the stubborn exceptions.

Even stranger than primitive man's eagerness to discard a past that continued for generations within slowly shifting dikes of custom and style is the inclination of modern Western man, if he considers himself cultured and enlightened, to look back with nostalgia on the primitive world at the very moment when it is dying. He seems to find within it the values he knows his own world lacks. Such a feeling is even more prevalent now than it was in the 1920s, when primitive peoples and their arts became of notable interest to artists and intellectuals. It is no longer confined to anti-rationalist prophets of blood and passion like D. H. Lawrence; it has been voiced in recent years, not only by artists in emotional revolt against orthodox aesthetics, but also by rational and articulate thinkers like André Malraux and Claude Lévi-Strauss and, somewhat more obliquely, Northrop Frye.

Yet although scholars in many disciplines have recently paid much attention to vanishing primitive cultures and the process of their decay, little has been written about why civilized man is nowadays so fascinated by what we used to call—in the days when we were busily destroying them—"savage" cultures. The change in our attitudes is shown even in

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such a simple matter as the changed connotation of the word "primitive," by which we now prefer to describe such cultures. Not very long ago "primitive" suggested the crude, the unlettered, the superstitious, the bestial. Today it carries overtones of the pristine and unspoiled. It even suggests an age in man's development that fostered special wisdoms—wisdoms that, in the crisis of our civilization, we might well endeavor to regain.

This changed attitude of modern Western man cannot be dismissed entirely as a perverse longing for what he has allowed to die, nor can it be attributed solely to that interest in the exotic which emerges in all aging civilizations. Such longings and interests do exist, but they cannot wholly explain our generally changed view of those peoples whom fifty years ago even such classic anthropologists as Sir James Frazer and Bronislaw Malinowski still referred to as "savages"—meaning peoples far lower on the ladder of progress that humanity, despite setbacks, was still ascending.

This is not, of course, the first time that the intellectuals of high civilizations have paid homage to earlier cultures. But it is the first time they have done so with a fair knowledge of what those cultures actually were. In classical antiquity there existed the myth of the Golden Age, before the days of the Homeric heroes. It was an era when men lived in peace and pastoral contentment, in contrast to the Iron Age of war and catastrophe that the Athenian Greeks, even under the enlightened rule of Pericles, saw as their destiny. In the Golden Age there were neither rulers nor ruled, neither war nor want, because men without inordinate desires lived on what they gathered from the untilled earth and what their herds provided. This old vision corresponded in some ways to the actual existence of pre-agrarian peoples, but omitted the harsher realities.

The memory of a golden past died in the Middle Ages, when the lost Earthly Paradise gave place in men's visions to a Heavenly Paradise existing already but awaiting its earthly inhabitants. Then, as the medieval order fell apart, the Golden Age was revived in a new form. Renaissance men were political in a rather physical way, embodying their visions in great architectural concepts—neo-Hellenistic planned cities and baroque palaces. Might not—many of them thought—a society be created in which the revolutionary town planning of the new sixteenth-century cities would foster the kind of rational and uncomplex life the pre-Homerics were once thought to have lived? Out of such speculations arose new Golden Age visions like Campanella's City of the Sun, Andreae's Christianopolis, and, above all, More's Utopia. In their

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meticulously planned cities, More's utopians sustained a kind of communism then thought to correspond with the economic arrangements of simple agrarian peoples, in which they lived without the two complicating factors linked with all known civilizations: wealth and ostentation.

During the same period, the discovery of the Americas and the Portuguese voyages to Africa brought Europeans in contact with real primitive peoples—something they had not experienced since Rome first pushed the frontiers of its empire to the rim of the barbarian world. Europeans at first saw American and African primitives as inferior beings—at best as unspoiled children to be converted into imitation Christian gentlemen or, alternatively, to be exploited for the benefit of a commerce that ranged from trade in ivory to trade in slaves.

Parallel with those derogatory attitudes toward primitive man, there emerged among rationalist thinkers in the late seventeenth century the cult of the noble savage, demonstrated most dramatically in Aphra Behn's novel *Oroonoko*. Its eponymous hero, a black slave rebel in the plantations of Surinam, was not in any real sense a primitive. Oroonoko was a paragon of all the Renaissance virtues, though his skin happened to be black, and he appears to have been utterly devoid of the tribal customs and beliefs that we know West Africans took with them into slavery. Later, through Jean Jacques Rousseau's argument that man was naturally good and untainted by original sin, the noble savage became the personification of natural humanity. He presided over the development of early socialist and anarchist doctrines, whose exponents justified their theories by arguing simplistically that early man had neither property nor government and that existing society was therefore a perversion of natural law. Hence man must be returned—on a higher level, of course—to the peace and happiness and (for anarchists at least) to the simplicity of his golden primitive past.

Such idealists created ideological dummies in the same way as evangelists created the theological dummy of the benighted heathen. Real experiential knowledge of primitive man percolated slowly into Europe through travelers, missionaries, and traders. A few early voyagers—like Cook among the Polynesians—kept diligent accounts of what they saw, but the protoscience of ethnology, the knowledge of peoples and their cultures, hardly existed before the late nineteenth century.

A crucial factor in the development of anthropological sciences was the triumph of Darwinism and the recognition, even before Charles Darwin published *The Descent of Man* just over a century ago, that humanity had its place not only in the Great Chain of Being, but also in

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the evolutionary progression, and was therefore a fit subject for scientific investigation. Yet the immediate effect of Darwin's insights was to blur men's perceptions of primitive cultures. Thomas Henry Huxley, the Saint Paul of evolutionary doctrine, envisaged the existence of early man as dominated by cruelty, darkness, and conflict. "Beyond the limited and temporal relations of the family," runs his celebrated assertion, "the Hobbesian war of each against all was the normal state of existence." Huxley evidently had little awareness of the role of tribal structures and customary taboos in limiting conflict. Other evolutionists, however—such as the anarchist geographer Prince Piotr Kropotkin, who wrote *Mutual Aid*—maintained that the really important factor in human as in animal evolution had been the instinct of sociality. Kropotkin saw a dual pattern of influences at work in the tribal world of primitive man: on the one side, orally transmitted systems of culture and law that emerged from natural social impulses; on the other side, systems of magic and taboo that emerged from negative inclinations toward authority. What Kropotkin failed to understand—and no one really grasped it until early in the twentieth century—was that tribal custom and law were validated by the systems of magic and taboo and were even, in the view of actual primitives, indistinguishable from such systems. Both Huxley, who saw evolution as a dark struggle toward an uncertain light, and Kropotkin, who saw it as a joyous pilgrimage, failed to view primitive man as the representative of a complex, valid way of life contemporaneous with our own, neither intrinsically inferior nor necessarily improvable.

Recognition of that view came about through shifts in attitude and sensibility among Western artists and intellectuals, shifts that became evident during the early years of the present century. Three events of that time assume (in my view) both symbolic and instrumental importance. In 1907, Picasso listened to the silent voices of African artifacts and painted the pioneer work of cubism, *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*. Between 1907 and 1915, Sir James Frazer published the twelve volumes of *The Golden Bough*. And between 1914 and 1918, the Anglo-Polish anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski did his pioneer field studies in the Trobriand Islands, out of which emerged such classic surveys of a primitive culture experienced in depth as *Argonauts of the Western Pacific, Crime and Custom in Savage Society,* and *The Sexual Life of Savages in North-Western Melanesia*.

The timing of these key events was most significant. They all occurred during the decades immediately after the rival British, French, and German empires carved up between them the last tribal territories in Africa and Oceania. From this point on, every primitive culture was

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inevitably brought in contact with European political and social forces, and the effect was rapid and catastrophic. In 1916, Malinowski remarked how the great ceremonial trading voyages of the Trobriand Islanders had dwindled in the twenty years since white men's laws had been superimposed on primitive custom and primitive magic. And Frazer, gathering his great compendium on sacrificial kingship, was already to a great extent talking historically, for many of the customs he described as recently practiced either had been suppressed by white missionaries or officials, or had decayed through a failure of spirit following the powerful intrusion of European ways.

The way Picasso came in contact with African art poignantly symbolizes the changing relationship. He did not use African artifacts in their ceremonial setting, nor did he encounter any of the artists who made them. He first saw them when, after the consolidation of the great twentieth-century empires, primitive sculptures were brought to Europe by traders and colonial officers returning home. These works showed up in museums as ethnographic specimens and in secondhand shops as curios. Nobody in the art establishment thought of them as art, since they were so different from Christian and Renaissance sculptures. So it was that around 1906 Matisse found, in the shop of an old Paris curio dealer, some sculptures from West Africa. They interested him for their vigor and because they were totally unlike anything then conventionally accepted in France as art. He showed them to Picasso, who shared his enthusiasm and under their impact painted *Les Demoiselles*. From this source one of the strong mainstreams of modernism in painting began to flow.

The influence of Frazer and Malinowski on the new consciousness of primitive cultures was decisive though less direct, ironically so with regard to Malinowski. Outside anthropological circles his most widely read work was *The Sexual Life of Savages,* which, I remember, was being sold during the 1920s in London contraceptive shops as a piece of recondite erotica. The book stimulated the curiosity of writers because it presented a striking alternative morality to that of the Victorians. The example of the Trobrianders seemed to show that sexual permissiveness, long a dogma of the decadents and their bohemian successors, worked. This validation of beliefs and practices long dismissed as libertine had its effect on literature between the world wars and on the attenuation of censorship after the second of these conflicts. Satirists such as Aldous Huxley and Evelyn Waugh, and moralists such as Lawrence and Eliot, could offer at least one justification during the 1920s for their advances outside the Victorian rules of the literary game. They were applying to

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contemporary Western behavior the same observant eye that Malinowski and his fellows had applied to the Trobrianders and other primitive peoples whose patterns of sexuality, though exotic when viewed from Bloomsbury, were no stranger than those of Englishmen and Americans marred by Puritan inhibitions.

The wandering traveler, who in the nineteenth century had brought home a splendid harvest of narratives from alien worlds, began to turn his attention inward as the fields of exploration were exhausted and the doom of empires drew evidently near. The inquisitive glance that had once been directed at primitive peoples was now directed at their conquerors. Tom Harrisson's *Savage Civilization*, a 1930s study of a New Hebridean primitive culture in high decay, directly inspired the techniques of the pioneer public opinion survey, Mass Observation. During the 1930s many younger English poets, including Charles Madge, Kathleen Raine, Ruthven Todd, and myself, were involved in this survey. The resemblances between Harrisson's book on a Melanesian culture in decline and such a contemporary study of English working-class life as George Orwell's *The Road to Wigan Pier* are extraordinary. Orwell descended into *les bas fonds* of English society in the same manner as an anthropologist descending into a primitive society, wishing to identify with that society but aware of being unacceptable. The documentary reportage as a literary form, so characteristic of the 1930s, was in fact the almost direct outgrowth of the kind of exotically readable narrative that anthropologists habitually wrote before their quasi-science became academically respectable and, as a result, protected itself with a wall of esoteric jargon.

Modern scientific anthropologists reject Sir James Frazer; by persistent questioning, I have discovered that few of them have even opened the rich pages of *The Golden Bough*. But Frazer's influence among writers, creators and critics alike—and perhaps also among other artists—has been immense, as John B. Vickery recently revealed in his exhaustive survey, *The Literary Impact of "The Golden Bough."* Frazer taught that we, much like our primeval ancestors, arrange our imaginative lives in patterns of myth. This recognition led to the understanding that art is modern man's equivalent of early man's animistic beliefs, which formed a system of symbolic power within the natural world. Poets like T. S. Eliot who have made their obeisance to Frazer are only the confessed examples of the influence of this classicist, who probed through the antique myths to their prehistoric and primitive origins. It is hard to think of any seriously considered writer in the English language emerging after 1910 who did not, consciously or unconsciously, in some degree

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accept or react against *The Golden Bough* as a chart to the labyrinth of the modern consciousness as well as a guide to its overt subject, the institution of sacrificial kingship.

Since the days of Picasso and Frazer and Malinowski, the constants of creation that unite primitive and "sophisticate" art have been accepted. They have been variously related by writers like Herbert Read and André Malraux to Freud's psycholoanalytical teachings; to Jung's theory of the collective unconscious; and to the anti-mortality of the existentialist, with its implications regarding art's power, timelessness, and universality. The special rapport between primitive art and twentieth-century high art has also been recognized. Among the visual arts in particular, a familiarity with the primitive modifies even movements that (like surrealism) are distant in spirit from Picasso's original cubism, and appears in the work of many individual artists who do not fit easily into schools and movements. It has also drawn the critic and the artist closer than in the past, since it has led the critic away from the temporally conditioned role of evaluation and toward the creative role Wilde posed for him—that of imaginative interpreter, moving through the cultural continuum that the myth provides, and charting the deeper resonances of artifacts and of the minds from which they emanate.

Three specific exemplars of this creative role are a Pacific Coast artist in whose work appears an unusually intimate relationship with a primitive tradition; a critic deeply affected by the findings of anthropologists—or rather of one key anthropologist—writing of primitive cultures; and an anthropologist who, perhaps more than any other contemporary, has explored the implications of modern man's equivocal acceptance of the primitive. The artist Jack Shadbolt and the critic Northrop Frye are both Canadians; the French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss has long been interested in the Indian culture of the Canadian Pacific coast. It is possible indeed that within the national culture of Canada the mingling of native primitive elements and alien civilized ones has been more evident than in most other countries.

Jack Shadbolt is an internationally recognized painter who, except for a student interlude in New York and two or three *Wanderjahre* in Europe and Mexico, has chosen to work in British Columbia, where he went as a young child from England. Looking at any reasonably representative selection of Shadbolt's paintings, one is at once aware of the resonances of the native Indian art of British Columbia and Alaska—the art of masks and heraldic poles and ceremonial rattles and theatrical machines for secret rites that made this region the center of one of the

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world's major primitive traditions. Yet only a few of Shadbolt's paintings actually take Coast Indian artifacts as their subjects, and when one looks at the others it is evident that Shadbolt is not imitating Indian artists, although he has obviously learned from them. He finds that some of their images evoke his own experience of living in the region of coast and rain forests which he shares with them, and so he adapts them to his own use in portraying the natural cycles that figure strongly in his work.

Iconographically, Shadbolt has clearly been fascinated by a procedure among Coast Indian artists connected with their shamanistic legends of the symbolic dismemberment of the initiate. In Coast Indian sculpture, painting, and even in the weaving of ceremonial blankets, as I recently wrote elsewhere:

> The literal forms of nature were cavalierly butchered as the spirits symbolically butchered the shamanic initiate. An animal might be shown kippered down the backbone, his body spread out on each side to fill the space involved; his bones and organs might be clearly delineated within his body; he might be represented in a composite design merely by a recognizable beak, tail or claws; his joints and features might be moved into quite unnatural compositions to satisfy the needs of design and the symbolic expression of clan or secret society myth.

In other words, natural forms were used in Coast Indian art symbolically and unnaturally, or at least unliterally, and the dislocation of such forms had a shamanic origin that developed into a way of creative artistic expression. It is this dislocation of elements of the natural world, and their reassembly into significant patterns, with its numinous implications, that Shadbolt has adopted. Throughout his career, but especially in the great triptychs of his mature years, he has used it to give expression to a personal mythology which, of course, is not that of a Coast Indian in the high days of totemic art but that of a modern man, urban and urbane yet deeply conscious of roots elsewhere. In this Shadbolt is typical of the better modern artists in their encounter with the primitive. There is no imitation or filiation; there is acceptance of kinship and transference of archetypal iconographies.

One can, of course, elaborate the differences between a modern artist like Shadbolt and a primitive counterpart. The primitive artist lives in a society that is outside history. Progress has no meaning for him, since even when it exists in his world he does not recognize it, and the forms of art are dictated by a pattern of custom that is almost static. Primitive art does not remain the same, yet changes slowly and within tight traditional channels. In contrast, modern art is the most changeable in the

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world's history; even individual artists change styles many times in a career.

Primitive art also tends to be divided into many self-contained tribal traditions, which often correspond with linguistic distinctions, though not always, since the Coast Indian tradition I have just discussed embraced a number of sharply distinct language groups. But modern art is eclectic, taking its forms and influences where it finds them; and, thanks to modern techniques of reproduction, it finds them everywhere.

Perhaps the most important difference between the primitive men whose artifacts we now admire as objects of art and modern painters or sculptors is that the primitive artist's activities or products had no meaning for him outside religion or magic or the social ceremony of his tribe. The idea of the artist as romantic rebel, or of art for art's sake, or of art as a defiance of mortality, would have been meaningless to him, who worked as a servant of cult or custom. But this is not to say that the primitive artist lacked the joy in creation that all creators experience. He gave his best to his work, and the powers of good artists were recognized, reverenced, and sometimes even feared, but only insofar as they interpreted a traditional and collective vision. Of course in many of the great postprimitive ages of artistic creation—medieval Europe, for example, or Buddhist Gandhara—the collective vision was also all-important and the artist contributed his talent as the monk contributed his devotion, without thought of individual glory.

It is not impossible that a radical transformation of modern society in the wake of economic or political changes might induce a return to such collectivity of vision. And this possibility has to be borne in mind when we consider why, given so many differences in attitudes and roles, modern artists have remained so greatly fascinated by artistic primitivism.

The answers to that question lead us beyond the bounds of art to the more general aspects of the fascination that the primitive holds for modern man. Considered merely in aesthetic terms, the interest in primitive cultures—which by definition are extremely conventionalized cultures—has a curiously paradoxical aspect: it is part of a wider revolt against convention emerging from the profound social changes that began to mature at the end of the nineteenth century. Academic art, and the "realist" art of the early social revolutionaries that was its radical counterpart, exemplified rational and predictable orders in which the concept of man as lord of creation was central. Christ, the Virgin, the saints were all portrayed as man elevated to glory. When a naturalist artist such as Proudhon's disciple Courbet showed us a man degraded

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by labor, it was to remind us of the glory of which men had been deprived. A Canaletto cityscape might show us men dwarfed; but it was the grandeur of their own achievements, exemplified in the palaces of Venice, that dwarfed them. A landscape by Poussin or Constable might even contain no human beings, but the scale would still be human, the pervading spirit not that of nature, but of man as philosopher sensing his oneness with it. The idea of an ordered world view, religious or scientific, lay behind such art, as did the idea of an ordered humanistic society, existing today or promised for the morrow of the revolution. The sense of a world in which man moved more or less as an equal among other living beings, essential to the animistic vision and to totemic art, was quite incompatible with such a view, which explains why eighteenth-century travelers like Cook and Alexander Mackenzie, who first saw the Indian sculptures of the Northwest American coast, had no conception of their meaning and equally little appreciation of their merit.

The twentieth century has brought a widespread breakdown of faith in the orders—religious, scientific, political, and social—that sustained the earlier generations of our own culture, and one of the results has been the rejection of art as the paradigm of an ideal order or as its mirror. Art, it has slowly been recognized, projects an inner, rather than portraying an outer, world; it moves through intuition rather than reason; its sources are as much in darkness as in light; it responds to presences more mysterious than the human intelligence. Modernism in the arts emerged largely out of such a recognition, and when modern artists turned toward the primitive world they were finding what they had long been seeking.

For primitive art does not glorify living man. Its portraits are those of ancestors, spirits, deities who, unlike the Olympian gods, do not manifest themselves in man's model. When the cubists broke apart the semi-divine figure of man and reassembled it in their paintings according to a different rationale than that of naturalism, they were doing exactly what the primitive artist did when he grotesquely transformed human features to create some spirit figure that, even now in its museum case, evokes an echo from a lost world where spiritual and physical were interfused. Primitive art encouraged the modern artist to disregard the phenomenal world of appearance and create new worlds to project his inner visions. The very disunity of primitive art helped to liberate the modern artist by revealing to him the infinitude of possible worlds of the imagination.

But the modern artist also discovered that these many worlds of the imagination were linked even in their disunity. Once a leap of understanding had illuminated one tradition of primitive art, another would

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soon become accessible to the observer, through some indefinable common aesthetic which suggested that Jung's idea of a collective unconscious uniting men of all cultures might not be outside reality even if it seemed outside reason. On the hypothesis of such an aesthetic, the whole of Malraux's writings on the visual arts has been based.

A similar sense that knowledge of the primitive world can reveal to us a human unity more pervasive than politicians can ever achieve has led anthropologists to visions that significantly parallel the insights of modern artists. While Malinowski, in his books on the small and remote culture of the Trobriands, presented the first of many models of societies validly alternative to our own, Sir James Frazer—in the long journey he took through world mythology to explain the story of the King of the Wood at Nemi—revealed a network of common mental constructions that encompassed all mankind. Divided as we are by language and history, we are joined, he demonstrated, by shared obsessions which emerge in the myths that project our collective dreads and hopes.

Whereas Frazer's writings gave him, as John Vickery has recognized, a widespread inspirational role in the modern movement in literature, it was in the writings of the critic Northrop Frye that the great classicist-anthropologist's insights were most consciously and ingeniously applied to the work of English writers. Frye carried over into the postmodern age the ideas that Frazer first developed—and also much of the content of the latter's work, as one begins to understand on reading Frye's lecture, which is also a tribute, "Sir James Frazer."

In that lecture Frye remarks that *The Golden Bough* is "more a book for literary critics than for anthropologists," which is true. He declares it "a kind of grammar of the human imagination." Before Frazer, "interest in religion was confined mainly to theology or to history, and myth was felt to be just something that wasn't true—something all the *other* religions had. But now we can see how religion can appeal to the imagination as well as faith or reason." And he proceeds to a passage assessing the importance of *The Golden Bough* that deserves extensive quotation:

> Its value is in its central idea: every fact in it could be questioned or re-assessed without affecting that value. We don't have to assume that once upon a time everybody everywhere used to eat their kings, and then gradually evolved slightly less repulsive customs. Frazer's ritual is to be thought of as something latent in the human imagination; it may have been acted out literally sometimes, but it is fundamentally a hypothesis which explains features in rituals, not necessarily the original ritual from which all the others have derived. *The Golden Bough* isn't really about what people did in a remote and savage past; it is

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about what the human imagination does when it tries to express itself about the greatest mysteries, the mysteries of life and death and after-life. It is a study, in other words, of unconscious symbolism on its social side. . . .

A ritual, in magic, is done for practical purposes, to make the crops grow, to baffle enemies, to bring rain or sunshine or children. In religion, a ritual expresses certain beliefs and hopes and theories about supernatural beings. The practical results of magic don't work out; religious beliefs disappear or change in the twilight of the gods. But when deprived of both faith and works, the ritual becomes what it really is, something made by the imagination and a potential work of art. As that, it can grow into drama or romance or fiction or symbolic poetry. Poetry, said Aristotle, is an imitation of nature, and the structures of literature grow out of the patterns which the human mind sees in or imposes on nature, of which the most important are the rhythms of recurrence, the day, the month, the four seasons of the year. *Poets can get from Frazer a new sense of what their own images mean, the critics can learn more from him about how the human imagination has responded to nature than from any other modern writer.*

The words I have italicized provide the essential clue. We need not take Frye's interpretation literally any more than he takes Frazer's expositions literally, since it is obvious that he is appropriating only that part of Frazer's content which suits his purposes as a systematic critic. But we can recognize that Frazer has provided for both poets and critics an opening of understanding toward the primitive mind, which in an artistic sense is the pristine mind, and so has contributed to the complexity, the subtlety, the depth of their imaginative constructions.

It is important to observe that those who use the resonances of the primitive imaginatively do not regress creatively. A painter like Jack Shadbolt learns what he can from his Indian predecessors in technical terms, accepts what primitive iconographies can teach him of his own potentialities, and then proceeds to the making of works that are both personal and contemporary. In the same way, Northrop Frye, having learned from Frazer, does not proceed to interpret primitive art or to apply its criteria to the writings of Elizabethan or modern poets; he seeks instead manifestations of myth that are appropriate to the literary traditions he is discussing, recognizing that the critic must be historian as well and that art—whether or not it is timeless—does not look back. Derived though it may be from other art, it always progresses in the sense of advancing toward insights that are new in kind if not in quality.

Yet the lure of the primitive does not lie merely in the broadened techniques and iconography that painters and poets may gain by exposure to its arts—nor in the revelations of the sources of human creativity brought about by a recognition of the mythologizing habit we share with primitives. There is an element of nostalgia as well, which

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penetrates all of modern art and literature and reflects a haunting sense of human degeneration within a ruined world. Here in North America it is seen in the fashionable cult of the environment, and the current glorification of native peoples whom, up to now, the dominant society has always despised and deprived.

As I have said, anthropologists have devoted little energy to studying this phenomenon. They have little interest in discovering why the educated modern man not only seeks to understand primitive peoples more intensively than at any time in the past, but also feels attracted to their cultures—so attracted that Eskimo and African artifacts, authentic and imitation, have become as familiar in North American homes as imitation Dresden was half a century ago. No ocean cruise to the South Pacific is regarded as complete without its ritual visits to villages where lost primitives wearily enact their now meaningless ceremonials for commercial gain.

It is because of this omission that Lévi-Strauss's *Tristes tropiques* is so precious a work. In this account of a young man's journeys among remote tribes of Brazilian Indians, Lévi-Strauss not merely examines the fragile cultures he encounters, but also contemplates the dominant Western culture—a society that feels the need to learn of such alternative ways of existence at the very time when it speeds their destruction.

There is a special poignancy about *Tristes tropiques* that is bound up with the history of its writing and publication. The travels Lévi-Strauss records were made in the 1930s. The book was written two decades later and published in 1955, although no complete English edition was published for another eighteen years, when in 1973 a fine translation by John and Doreen Weightman appeared. By this time the peoples of whom Lévi-Strauss wrote, and their cultures, had long vanished in the irrevocable way of those who leave no lasting artifacts. (The great art of one of these tribes was the painting of faces in patterns of extraordinary grace and fantasy, but when the faces disappeared so did the art.) Unlike Frazer, Lévi-Strauss immersed himself in actual primitive cultures, but unlike Malinowski he did not immerse himself long and deeply. The result was that combination of detachment, sharp observation, and occasional agonizing empathy that the best of rapid travelers achieve in their narratives.

Tristes tropiques gains its effect largely from the fact that Lévi-Strauss is himself an incurable devotee of the pristine, the unspoiled in human creations. "Man never creates anything truly great except at the beginning," he remarks at the end of his book, and throughout it he stresses

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how the very first contact with an alien world destroys the integrity of a primitive society. This is what makes so equivocal the role of the anthropologist who encounters a hitherto undiscovered group of primitives. As Lévi-Strauss writes:

> There is no more thrilling prospect for the anthropologist than that of being the first white man to visit a particular community. . . . I was about to relive the experience of the early travellers and, through it, that crucial moment in modern thought when, thanks to the great voyages of discovery, a human community which believed itself to be complete and in its final form suddenly learned, as if through the effect of a counter-revelation, that it was not alone, that it was part of a greater whole and that, in order to achieve self-knowledge, it must first of all contemplate its unrecognizable image in this mirror, of which a fragment, forgotten by the centuries, was about to cast, for me alone, its first and last reflection.

"Self-knowledge" is here the key concept. Our first reaction to a strange society, if our minds are receptive, is wonder. "When one is faced," Lévi-Strauss remarks, "with a society which is still alive and faithful to its traditions, the impact is so powerful that one is quite taken aback; which strand in the multicoloured skein should one first try to unwind and disentangle?" Perhaps the most profound of all the experiences of travelers is the encounter with a society that, unlike their own, lives in harmony with its environment. Remembering what he had seen of the America of the Indians, Lévi-Strauss could also confess, "I cherish the reflection, however fleeting it may have now become, of an era when the human species was in proportion to the world it occupied, and when there was still a valid relationship between the enjoyment of freedom and the symbols denoting it."

Such communities, Lévi-Strauss suggests, may be purer and freer precisely because they are preliterate. He reflects that in history the role of literacy has been less to consolidate knowledge than to strengthen dominion. Compulsory education has gone hand in hand "with the extension of military service and proletarianisation" and with the assumption that "everyone must be able to read, so that the government can say: Ignorance of the law is no excuse." And he looks—before the Third World revolt against Western political forms had taken on its present impetus—to a situation remarkably like the present, of "an international society of privileged countries worried by the possibility of its stability being threatened by the reactions of peoples insufficiently trained in the use of the written word to think in slogans that can be modified at will or be an easy prey to suggestion." All this fits in with his inclination to believe in a kind of *ur*-philosophy lying at the basis of all

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human intellectual traditions, and to which the primitive man may be closer than his civilized counterpart.

Inevitably, deep and sinister ambiguities have entered the relationships between sophisticated and primitive societies. When at the earlier stages of predatory contact it was difficult for European men to understand the strange civilizations they encountered in other lands, the invaded cultures might have been extinguished but they were not corrupted. The greater the understanding, the mutual attraction, the greater became the corruption of weaker societies—which meant the primitive ones—and the more equivocal and hypocritical became the attitude of Western man.

> The fact is that these primitive peoples, the briefest contact with whom can sanctify the traveller, these icy summits, deep caverns, and impenetrable forests—all of them august settings for noble and profitable revelations—are all, in their different ways, enemies of our society, which pretends to itself that it is investing them with nobility at the very time when it is completing their destruction, whereas it viewed them with terror and disgust when they were genuine adversaries.

It is this equivocal attitude of modern Western man that makes travel books, including *Tristes tropiques* itself, so attractive on immediate reading. They foster the dreams of those who look with nostalgic longing on primitive cultures, because they "create the illusion of something that no longer exists but still should exist, if we were to have any hope of avoiding the overwhelming conclusion that the history of the past twenty thousand years is irrevocable."

No true anthropologist, of course, and equally no true artist, lives under the illusion that the past can or should be recovered. That kind of naïve longing is outside the sense of kinship that attracts him to primitive cultures and primitive man. He rejects what Lévi-Strauss describes as "the nostalgic cannibalism of history," which must be appeased with "the shadows of those that history has already destroyed."

In striking passages that many modern artists might well be tempted to apply to themselves, Lévi-Strauss remarks that anthropology arose in response to the remorse of Western Europe, which "forced it to compare its image with those of different societies in the hope that they would show the same defects or would help to explain how its own defects had developed within it." He sees the anthropologist's role as "an attempt at redemption" and the anthropologist himself as "the symbol of atonement."

Granting this much, whatever may be said for the anthropologist

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must be qualified with the observation that in many situations he initiated, by his very entry, the corruption of a particular society for which his work atones (a further example of the equivocal nature of all "civilized" contacts with simpler and more vulnerable societies). We then come to the fact that the artist also uses what he learns from primitive societies for purposes of self-knowledge, but not for atonement—not to examine his own world's defects, but rather to find the grand outlines of what is universal in the human consciousness. Insofar as art is utopian in character and intent, it is so in the awareness it gives us of a community of myth and symbolism and hence of significant forms, the one indubitable universal commonwealth where Shakespeare lives beside Homer, where Picasso and the cave painter of Lascaux are equal citizens.

This, by definition, is a visionary commonwealth, beyond the walls of ordinary social existence. But Lévi-Strauss poses a further dialogue with the primitive, which the artist as well as the anthropologist conducts, when he remarks of anthropology (in his hands more an art than a science): ". . . by bringing out the characteristics common to the majority of human societies, it helps us to postulate a type, of which no society is a faithful realization, but which indicates the direction the investigation ought to follow."

Thus in the contemporary Western world the lure of the primitive appears in dual form: in a pointless nostalgia for peoples and ways of existence that our greed for land and resources has destroyed, as it has irrevocably destroyed whole animal species; and in a positive desire to find what is common to all societies, what illuminates our modern selves with light sent from pasts and distances we shall never visit. In the latter sense, the experiencing and recording of primitive societies, the discovery and appreciation of primitive artifacts have already enriched our existences. They may still assist us on the way to a society that will be moderately just and equal yet, unlike all socialist societies up to the present, may be free as well, and, to slightly misquote Lévi-Strauss, "in proportion to the world it occupies."

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Place Names

(*For Michael*)

KATE JENNINGS

You're building the fire, your face removed, distracted.
I watch you fill the clanking grill with flame and fan it,
coaxing smoke from coals. Remote, benched now on the sidelines,
I bide my time at the plank picnic table the park provides.
It's late August, and hot, though we're camped sky-high.
Sitting here, what I'm thinking about is several things:
a woman's place, for one, and what we'll name this baby,
and a breakfast we ate in a South Dakota cafe last summer.

There's some connection I can't quite place or name between
the baby I'm carrying and you cooking supper and me writing
poems and you and me camping by the Snake River. I guess
that unless you grew up east of Chicago, you can't imagine
the foreign charm of *Devil's Tower,* or the *Badlands.* I mean
what's Beirut, what's Helsinki, when there's *Cody, Wyoming,* or
Custer, South Dakota? We called my mother collect from there
and she, beside herself with excitement, her voice cracking,
cried to my father, "They're calling from *Custer, South Dakota*!"
They sold rocks there. You stole me a chip of rose quartz.
Later, at Craters of the Moon, you stole yourself a piece you
still prize, one holey lump of lava rock, two thousand years old.

This year we didn't go as far afield. A woman's place,
in my state, is close to home. We've pitched our tent
in the Blue Ridge, a far cry from the Big Horns. Now a
collect call would cost less and cause less excitement.
You're doing my work tonight, cooking supper while I think
about things: the price of bread, for instance, and the
distance between Virginia and Montana, and the way the baby
leaps when I start typing. There's some connection here

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but I see it, sense it, only dimly. I look down at my calm
arms, tan, empty, idle, crossed at ease on the rough table.
You stir the stew and bring me bourbon in an enameled cup
and light a propane lamp, turning the sky a shade darker.

The cool dew is damp early now, a clue to September.
I rest my chin on my arms, wondering who we'll name
and where he'll fit in, and trying out tentatively
proper names: mother. Father. New places for us
to fit in, a new face to place, a third party who
might someday better name the smoky blue view we
share alone tonight, a pair of campers under a cone
of stars: two, and a new unknown camper coming up.

✪ KATE JENNINGS's poetry and fiction have appeared in several journals, among them the *Carleton Miscellany, Poetry, Shenandoah,* and the *Virginia Quarterly.*

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Practical and Visionary Americans

QUENTIN ANDERSON

MORE THAN HALF A CENTURY AGO Van Wyck Brooks suggested that the condition required to make American culture coherent was an understanding between the descendants of Benjamin Franklin and those of Jonathan Edwards. The hope was misconceived, but the fact that it was a current commonplace for two generations shows that it had an important function. I believe that it screened American intellectuals from a dismaying recognition of the encounter of the two strains within themselves.

The inner struggle between the practical and the visionary in each of us could be considered in comfort if these traits were assigned to separate classes of people. My premise is that the American individual has, by the very nature of his culture, been peculiarly exposed to feelings of guilt about acquisition. Brooks's distinction between the classes that I call practical and visionary gave us a way around this. In keeping with an easy liberalism that attributed unwelcome traits to others, and with the pleasure we took in paying undistracted attention to our visionaries, we followed Brooks's lead. The guilt of acquisition could be identified with the practical men, and they were welcome to whatever glory was to be had from the accomplishment of taking possession of the continent and transforming its latent energy into wealth.

An indicative disparity lies in the treatment we accord these two halves of the split American. We see the practical men, the agents of material transformations, as time-bound, while the visionaries are not. The practical men of earlier times, including Franklin himself, elude our imaginative grasp and slip into an unrealizable past; the visionaries are still at our elbows. Three-quarters of the way through the twentieth century the most admired of these visionaries, Thoreau and Whitman, remain audible voices. By contrast, the practical men, the effectual agents in the only kind of history we know how to write, seem as hard for

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us to imagine as they were for Henry James. When the practical and the visionary appear in conjunction the fact confounds us. Wallace Stevens was successful in business; we can make nothing of this. He was also a brilliant visionary and of this we make much—even everything, as does J. Hillis Miller, who places him with the "poets of reality," as if the practical were indeed the illusory.

It appears that we thrust the active, practical part of the self into the past. If Brooks's division was a way of projecting an inner opposition outside the American self, why is it that we think of our visionaries in the present tense? A provisional answer is that we value what is unconditioned and atemporal above action in the world. This does not mean that we are not frantically busy; it means that action in the world is a threat to our sense of ourselves, which we have never defined. In our culture the balance is significantly tilted toward authority for the self as against the authority of traditions and institutions. For members of self-conscious social groups, such as the East Prussian Junkers and the peasants bound to their holdings whom Max Weber studied, the past has a meaning that encloses each individual's present; his history is a part of him. We must assume that Americans found themselves entrusted with more of the task of self-definition than this; the past became in their eyes rather more "representative" (I use Emerson's term) of their felt present as individuals, and rather less a compelling set of antecedent events. History became exemplary rather than dramatic or personally compelling in just the measure that one came to think one's own perceptions in the present a sufficient way of understanding the past. Whitman's line about a historical event suggests this: "I am the man, I suffered, I was there," means that he has successfully annulled the idea of the past as controlling the character of his present; it serves as an extension of his present experience.

The claim to such a wide authority over reality as this has a religious origin. Jonathan Edwards, who wrote and preached during the first half of the eighteenth century, offers a useful example of the form in which this wide personal authority was first claimed. Edwards does not seem nearly as contemporary as does Whitman because he is anchored in the past by his allegiance to a social group, the congregation. Yet he offers the most convenient historical approach to our visionaries because he tells us how he arrived at his solitary perception of reality. He read John Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, and learned that all he knew came to him through his own senses and his reflections upon what they had reported. Locke had held

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that the understanding was adequate to our needs; Edwards pushed this as far as it would go, and in him it became wholly authoritative. God's gift to him of a "divine and supernatural light" changed no perception, conferred no idea; it simply made plain the glorious coherence and sufficiency of what he had apprehended and reflected upon. To this adorable unity he submitted himself; in it the divine wholly suffused the natural and social orders. Yet no part of the whole could be taken for granted; everything had to be recapitulated within the mind and sensibility of the individual.

In the comparatively rarefied social medium of provincial America, Locke's work had found a much more inclusive use than it had in England. Constance Rourke remarked of such cultural forces from overseas, "Because they appeared in comparative isolation they reverberated like loud voices in an empty room; and they fell into new relationships." In Edwards's hands, Locke afforded proof that individual perception was the sole avenue through which civic and religious order could be maintained. Yet Edwards is only the plainest illustration. Religious convictions hinging on a wholly sufficient inward illumination were widespread in New England, and neither Locke nor Edwards can fully account for their pervasive character.

The ministers of eighteenth-century New England lamented a decay of organized worship. Read positively, this suggests the familiar conclusion that the ready and practical Americans had incorporated the authority to pass judgment on their world which the church had formerly held. That their inward assurance had lost its religious character is also a familiar assertion, but not, I think, warranted. The religious impulse had been confided to a new temple, the self.

It was in the Jacksonian period that American individualism first made itself felt in every aspect of American life. Discussion of this has focused on the social results of the activities of individuals, but we know little about the emotional dispositions of these people. Plainly, the internal mediators between impulse and action built into each personality had lost some of their authority; the father, the church, the state, whose behests had been taken for granted, were no longer authoritative in the same degree. In that very measure the need for an inward authority became greater. Any description of the American selves that resulted must be tentative, for it is only in such figures as Emerson, Whitman, and Thoreau that it may be inferred, and we remain uncertain as to how widely representative their species of individualism was.

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If we listen to the testimony of those who have written about these figures, we must call them central. I am relying on this fact as evidence that Americans have persisted in claiming a peculiar authority for the self.

Some presumptions must be made about the assertion of a sufficient perception of reality as it was felt after Edwards's God, and the congregation to which Edwards had felt responsible, had lost their ascendancy over individual minds. This assertion entails a drastic reduction in the capacity to imagine that encounters with others will further a definition of self. For our visionaries, their most inclusive sense of the world is not at risk in encounters with others; the self has been walled off by the faith that it cannot be defined by its reciprocal relationships. If we imagine an anthropologist looking on from without, he might well be led to observe that a part of the process of becoming a self in such a culture is precisely the need to deny the efficacy of the operative familial and social constraints in fixing a sense of the self. In the space created by their vision, Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman claim to be the only begotten sons of that vision itself. The emphasis in early frontier humor on the American as the son of his extravagant deeds is paralleled in our visionaries by emphasis on the self as the result of its imaginative conquests.

Clearly, an emotional need was served by the denial of the influence of one's parents. As Whitman put it (and this applies to all three men), life was not like a play; for if it were, each of us would have but one part and could not define the meaning of the whole scene. This meant a covert denial of one's own activity on the social scene as definitive of the meaning of one's life; it also meant that the activities of others could not be regarded as important in the same degree as the inward vision one imputed to them. It is as if it had been asserted that everybody walked about with a skylight in his head, and what this enabled him to perceive must in every case take priority over what he and his fellows did or said to each other. The ignored aspect of the individualism we find in Emerson and Whitman is the denial of social reality implied by their wide affirmations, and their testimony to the stress that these denials produced in them. In considering these writers we shall be asking how they dealt with the "practical," both as they met it in themselves and as it existed in the outer world.

The young Emerson found himself unable, as he grew into a full sense of his demands on reality, to administer the rite of communion in his congregation. He could not take pleasure, as Jonathan Edwards had, in

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the belief that the very same mythos was recapitulated in the consciousness of every believer. Nor was his sense of the future framed by apocalyptic expectations as it had been for Edwards. In fact, Emerson called for a plurality of providences; each man was to discern his own. But he had the belief that had marked Edwards: whatever had significance was ideally fitted to his sensorium—the sole sanction of intelligibility and belief lay within. He was bounded only by the reach of his own powers rather than by the family, the congregation, revelation, or the state. In brief, Emerson had incorporated the power to authenticate his perception of the world which Edwards had accorded to the light of grace and the congregation.

The goal of a sufficient perception that Emerson sought demands an identification of the knower with the known, a moment in eternity. This moment has the character of a religious experience. Beside it an account of one's own life or of one's historical situation fades into insignificance. This view of the world is divorced, for example, from the romanticism of Wordsworth, which arises within the context of the maturation of man and poet in the period of the French Revolution. No such dialectic of recorded experience can be associated with Emerson. The religious experience of our visionaries is equally remote from the exciting discovery of the German romantic idealists that if one gave the knower a fresh metaphysical status one must also redefine the character of what could be known—and from the further discovery that both knower and known were immersed in temporal process. (Emerson's Unitarian contemporaries were in this respect more "romantic" than he, since some called for new institutions to complement their sense of a new phase in their consciousness.) Nothing can more firmly bar an awareness of what our visionaries were up to than calling them "romantic." To do so is to say that they had the very dialectical relation to society and to history they most strenuously denied. Any such concession to temporal change would have subjected them to the "practical" and left them without the inward authority they badly needed. A passage from Thoreau's *Journals,* which systematically appropriates the terms of Christian providence for the uses of the atemporal moment, makes this clear.

> One moment of life costs many hours, hours not of business but of preparation and invitation. Yet the man who does not betake himself at once and desperately to sawing is called a loafer, though he may be knocking at the doors of heaven all the while, which shall surely be opened to him. That aim in life is highest which requires the highest and finest discipline. How much, what

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infinite, leisure it requires, as of a lifetime, to appreciate a single phenomenon! You must camp down beside it as for life, having reached your land of promise, and give yourself wholly to it. It must stand for the whole world to you, symbolical of all things. The least partialness is your own defect of sight and cheapens the experience fatally. Unless the humming of a gnat is as the music of the spheres, and the music of the spheres is as the humming of a gnat, they are naught to me. It is not communications to serve for a history—which are science—but the great story itself, that cheers and satisfies me.

The "great story," six thousand years of Christian providence, has been transformed into a method of one-man salvation which may be realized in a day; the "land of promise" is inwardly possessed in a single man's "moment of life."

Emerson's human world, like Thoreau's, remained in most aspects of his encounters with other people the contemporary world of common sense. But in his moments of religious exaltation he canceled out every obstacle to a completely private possession of reality. At such moments he could say that "all things are moral," or decide that in spite of "all Hume and Germany" he will claim a wholly independent moral agency. By broadening a personal claim, he was pushing to its limits the eighteenth century's "moral sense." And his use of the assertion of a sufficient perception of reality as grounds for one man's moral absolutism rules out transcendentalism.

Emerson preached to the commonsensical gentile in himself and in his audience. He was representing the contradiction between the world of common sense and the inclusive perceptions that gave it the lie. C. P. Cranch's cartoon of Emerson as a stick figure whose head is a "transparent eyeball" that focuses all existence, catches the anomaly involved in a particular man's possession of—or subjection to—the whole of reality. Emerson was conscious of the contradiction, and was determined to maintain it in spite of his lapses and the world's laughter.

To suggest how anomalous his description of himself as a psychic entity turned out to be, here are a number of passages in which he makes explicit the assumption of his internal division. Naming things that lessen our sense of the unity of our nature, he writes in an early lecture: "These disturbing prejudices are personal, parental, patriot prejudices. Our friends we value as they conform to the ideal type of Man, not as they multiply idiosyncrasies." Similarly, he writes elsewhere: "What is fit to engage me and so engage others permanently is what has put off its weeds of time and place and personal relations." Sexual roles block this total vision: "The finest people marry the two sexes in their own persons.

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Hermaphrodite is then the symbol of the finished soul." A later passage summarizes the internal division in this way:

> The height of culture, the highest behavior consists in the identification of the ego with the universe; so that when a man says, I hope, I find, I think he might properly say the human race finds or thinks or hopes. And meanwhile he shall be able continually to keep sight of his biographical ego,—I have a desk, I have an office, I had an ague,—as rhetoric or offset to his grand spiritual Ego, without impertinence or ever confounding them.

The only dialectic Emerson carried on was between these egos.

He found himself split: a minor, necessary, and limiting ego dealt with the world subject to reciprocally determined relations with others; the "grand spiritual Ego" carried on the business of incorporating all reality. He was related to people on two planes. His upper story knew others under the bleak and impersonal conditions of shared vision he called "friendship"; his lower story lived at home and in the town. Henry James's wry remark about Emerson's New England, that it was "a society in which introspection—thanks to the want of other entertainment—played almost the part of a social resource," is more than a joke. Both Emerson's wife, Lidian, and Margaret Fuller recorded their painful efforts to obtain a recognition that only a man with a less fractured ego could have given them. Yet Emerson was busy proffering a model to Americans and found a warm response. He told his audiences that they could not marry or vote or fight or make a living without denying their fullest, most valuable selves, and they listened with attention and pleasure. If they were glad to be told of the kingdom within, were they equally glad of the attack on the fabric of their collective lives?

The opposition between the practical—or domestic—or acquisitive—self, and the world-embracing self, sounds, given the range of Western tradition, like very thin stuff: provincial, adramatic, ahistorical. But it is worth recalling that Nietzsche admired Emerson. He could surely see the hidden hammer with which Emerson worked. That hidden violence provoked a glee in his audience of which they were not openly aware. It subverted the terms of the world of common sense in the act of using them. Two sentences from the opening of Emerson's *Nature* are illustrative: "But to a sound judgment the most abstract truth is the most practical. Whenever a true theory appears it will be its own evidence." A double process is at work here: the world of common sense is being denied—its very universe of discourse appropriated; and the sufficiency of the self is being affirmed. The negations sweep clear the space that the

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affirmations then occupy. Emerson's prose was a dazzling achievement; its shifting lights scattered the image of a man carrying away the world's language and its very terms for its values—"love," "prudence," "friendship"—into a region in which they no longer stood for relations between actual persons. That language and those values were seized for the use of a company of incipient gods not yet assembled, the Americans we ought to become. There was little effect in saying, as did Francis Bowen in reviewing Emerson's *Nature,* "A hermitage is no school of morals." The appetite Emerson satisfied in his readers was the very one Bowen's antipathy detected: it was an appetite to get away from the world of our reciprocal conditioning. The audience Emerson found welcomed his brief but effectual rupture of its ties with a domestic, a political, perhaps most of all, a commercial scene.

Emerson, preacher to the nation, was never finished; he returned again and again to the job of asserting the visionary over the practical man. Whitman's *Leaves of Grass,* although he tinkered with it all his life, was a cultural manifesto from the start. It announced the end of guilt-ridden, socially conditioned Western man. Whitman tried for nothing less than the replacement of the practical self, construed as the thread of personal consciousness of identity, which William James later described in *The Principles of Psychology*. Whitman's audience was smaller than Emerson's in proportion to the greater extremity of his demand that it abandon once and for all the day-to-day identity of Emerson's "biographical ego." Whitman schooled his small group of disciples well, and we can draw on evidence of their awareness of both his affirmations and his negations. The cultural baggage Whitman wished to discard suggests a brilliant and precise inventory of the things that define and support Western character structure. The poet's friends and collaborators, among them John Burroughs, Richard M. Bucke, and Horace Traubel, all used his index of prohibited matters in writing about him.

The first and most essential discard is the personality built upon guilt and lust, and wholly defined by relations to other persons, which Whitman (in "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry") says he had once had. Christianity must go too. Instead of a providential history with a beginning and an anticipated end, Whitman calls for "unnumbered supremes," an endless procession of risen Christs streaming forth from the tomb, as in "Song of Myself." The power of man over man, given form in caste, status, and class, is to be discarded as well. History is judged to be threatening because any narrative limits our conception of ourselves. Events in the past simply exemplify our present possibilities. Stories, romances, epics,

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together with their characters and plots, are to be gotten rid of because they, more than anything else, directly compel the imagination. Love stories are worst of all; they tie you, as Spinoza would say, to the thought of an external cause. Metaphysical propositions are fatally constraining to our unbounded assertion of our possession of the world.

Whitman is most often specific in denouncing efforts to see his works as separate from himself, or to think of them as amusing objects rather than efforts to transform the reader's consciousness. He addresses a warning to us: "Dear friend! Not here for you melodious narratives, no pictures here for you to con at leisure as bright creations all outside yourself." Horace Traubel characterizes the function of all these denials for us: "These denials are thick every one with affirmation: for all that Whitman denies is denied out of respect for that primal self which today utters scripture and tomorrow will pulse in the life of the race."

In Whitman's poems, "soul" embraces all that appears in the world, and at moments his body itself is coterminous with the world. But mere personal identity is as a blade of grass, a shadow on the flood, a momentary focus of existence. Yet the strain and ambivalence arising from the effort to dissolve the unique perspective of one's own consciousness, and to cancel the views and wills of others, does emerge in Whitman, as it does in Emerson and Thoreau. A Whitman poem of 1856, "Poem of the Propositions of Nakedness," exhibits this strain in unmistakable form.

The title has a savage irony. In Whitman, to be naked is to be wholly unconstrained by argument, will, or purpose. "Propositions" shatter the Whitman world and reinstitute mere identities, a horde of lustful, greedy persons. The lines from this poem, quoted below, describe a hell that lies under "Song of Myself," and from which Whitman says he has escaped in "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry."

Let the theory of America be management, caste, comparison! (Say! what other theory would you?) [14]

Let the sun and moon go! Let scenery take the applause of the audience! Let there be apathy under the stars! [19]

Let nothing but love-songs, pictures, statues, elegant works, be permitted to exist upon the earth! [34]

Let a floating cloud in the sky—Let a wave of the sea—Let one glimpse of your eye-sight upon the landscape or grass—Let growing mint, spinach, onions, tomatoes—Let these be exhibited as shows at a great price for admission! [43]

Let the she-harlots and the he-harlots be prudent! Let them dance on, while seeming lasts! (O seeming! seeming! seeming!) [48]

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Here Whitman has gone down into the hell of the "practical" where he encounters coercion and his own impulse to coerce; mere appearances and the fear that his claim to possess reality is reducible to mere "seeming"; and a confusion of his greed with the greed of the world of practice. A crux for any account of Whitman—if not of this kind of American experience—occurs in the expression in line 43, in which Whitman fantasies that he himself, while carrying out the grandly representative action of taking possession of his world ("Let one glimpse of your eyesight upon the landscape or grass"), is being sold as a spectacle.

That the figure who defines and possesses the world in vision should become a figure *within* the world of the practical is of course logically impossible and contrary to Whitman's doctrine. But he is here giving rein to an opposing version of himself, possessed of a personal will, as in the line, "Let him who is without my poems be assassinated!" [27]

The internalized struggle with the cash nexus furnishes the poem's dominant images; the greatest horror is of a sexually passive situation in which one sells oneself, becomes, as in line 48, a "he-harlot." (That this is an inversion of the triumphant display in "Song of Myself" is clear, as is the threatening imaginative propinquity of triumphing *and* submitting in the act of displaying oneself.)

The poem as a whole is an attempt to cope with Whitman's own activity in actually selling himself. The very appearance of the first edition of *Leaves of Grass* echoed that of a best seller, *Fern Leaves from Fanny's Portfolio*. Newspaper puffs from his own hand, fake reviews, pieces he wrote under the names of friends, books hawked by his own efforts are the marks of his public career. The spectacle Whitman finds loathsome is intimately and subversively connected with the fact that he literally did sell what he had identified with himself: "Who touches this book touches a man." Emerson's disavowal of any connection with mere personages, with a selfhood established by its worth in the market of opinion, status, or wealth, is vehement. Thoreau also struggles to institute a visionary world in a commercial society. He accomplishes his denial of commerce as Emerson does that of the whole range of the "practical," by stealing its language for spiritual uses in the section of *Walden* called "Economy." But it is Whitman who touches the American nerve by making plain the ties between the visionary or religious self and a complex of notions about ownership, acquisition, and selling oneself.

The religious impulse which in Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman took the form of a claim to possess the whole world—if only at mo-

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ments—and to make this vision primary in the definition of self, is subject to the kind of disastrous inversion glimpsed in Whitman's poem. Have they, as we say, simply made a spectacle of themselves, or, worse still, are they revealing a monstrous greed? Linguistic usage, the very forms of our thought, suggests that the self is a kind of property. William James, in the chapter of his *Psychology* called "The Consciousness of Self," says, "*a man's Self is the sum total of all he* CAN *call his own*," and uses the idea of ownership in a crucial way to understand how the self can secure a sense of its continuity: it is a "Thought" that commands its past by "appropriating" earlier thoughts as its own. Something obstinately social in its meaning intrudes into the very temple of our vision, for what is property if not social? Emerson happily reports dreaming of the world as an apple and consuming it, but Emerson awake moves in a world in which his own vision encounters a conception of self built in the marketplace.

In a well-known scene between Isabel Archer and Madame Merle in Henry James's *The Portrait of a Lady*, the latter tells Isabel that she highly values things—objects, clothing, and so on—and that an arrangement of these is what makes the self visible as a presentment of personal being. Isabel replies that nothing she owns can fill out her vision of herself, and that, for her, fulfillment would be the realization of some dream of her youth. Her marriage is an attempt to manifest herself as what she, inwardly, is through her husband's exercise of his exquisite taste. When she perceives that she has offered her vision of herself as a possession or spectacle, she becomes, like Whitman, afraid of her own impulses.

James's terms for the opposition we have been following are illustrated here. He modifies the opposition as we found it in Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman by positing it as a temporal succession. We are first acquisitive, and only later enter into full possession of the world of our consciousness. One is, at the outset, inevitably acquisitive; there is no other way to fill the cup of selfhood. Nevertheless at a given moment the very activity of acquisition comes to be perceived as "other," as loathsome, and the self that has carried this activity on is blessed with the impulse to surrender its acquisitions to the world. The artist does this by conferring form on the wealth of his perceptions. James's work affords one instance in which a character within a novel arrives at the sort of creative result that Isabel Archer is not finally granted. Maggie Verver of *The Golden Bowl*, by refusing to act in what I have been calling the "practical" sphere as wife, mother, or daughter, and instead acting only (as she puts it to Mrs. Assingham) "for love" itself, rearranges the whole human scene on which she appears. She is, so to

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speak, the artist within the work, and when she takes possession of her prince the moment is apocalyptic: love informs mankind. Maggie acts, as others have remarked, for James himself. So James, a hidden god, takes possession of the world.

I noted at the outset that Americans have long been subject to feelings of guilt about acquisition. Both Whitman and Henry James see themselves as moving between the poles of guilty acquisition and guiltless possession. The hatred of America on the part of its citizens is not a product of the 1950s and 1960s. It is a projection of our greed upon the nation in order that we may fantasize a guiltless possession of the world for ourselves. This hatred has long coexisted with our loving celebration of what America could be if we all—separately!—achieved what Whitman called "the interior American republic." The idea that something as plural, various, and changing as a great nation-state could inspire loathing on the part of its citizens as citizens is clearly absurd. Such an emotion springs from an interior source; it is an emotion that individuals feel about the very condition of being an American person. We need only ask whether we can imagine a similar emotion—akin to that expressed in the recent denunciations of our "Kulchur"—among Italians, Frenchmen, Englishmen, to see that such blanket proclamations of disaffection can only arise from a projection of the loathing felt by individuals for a part of themselves. Our eager co-optation of figures who denounce us serves the individual need to discharge self-hatred rather than the presumed goal of social change. This goes far to explain our incapacity to entertain radical political ideas as the instruments of actual change. These ideas are used to supply the needs of the individual psyche rather than the nation.

Americans are no more greedy than other people. It was the self of exorbitant religious claims, subject to fits of self-hatred by its recurrent confrontations with the exorbitance of these claims, that gave us this illusion. Far from being racked by the exigencies of a Viennese superego (the incarnate demands of mother and father), we seem to have been agonized by the collision between our exorbitant dream and the fact that we were claiming it for our precious selves. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries parents themselves were encouraging their youngsters to transcend them. The very figures who might have become inward monitors, and thus mediated the conflict between practical and visionary, waved us on into a future they could not set standards for. Deprived of assurances based on our relations to persons, we are more likely to project guilt outward upon the society, in order to secure an

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assurance of our own worth. But doing so simply agglomerated the society as the enemy, the loathed part of the self, instead of subjecting it to scrutiny, analysis, and efforts to change it.

The sometimes open, sometimes covert, rage at the conditions of associated life, and the concomitant assertion of a separate or individual omnipotence, has had more influence on the character of our intellectual life than we have been able to acknowledge. Two thinkers who were self-proclaimed men of practice, William James the pragmatist and John Dewey the instrumentalist, both widely influential, are examples of this visionary distortion of the national scene.

Both men had a high admiration for Emerson, whom Dewey called "the philosopher of democracy." Both assert the priority of the visionary second story—the self-authenticated values and the inclusive hopes of the individual. Dewey, who had no sympathy with organized religion, speaks of these values and hopes as "religious." These men of practice preserved the primacy of Emerson's "grand spiritual Ego," and this meant that what was distinctive and of value about the individual was perceived apart from his or her sexuality, apart from the unique conditions of individual rearing, apart from the passions, the harshness, and the complexity of any actual human life. In these respects we were, socially speaking, reduced to units—with skylights in our heads! These effectual Emersonians, optimistic, benign, and lovable, had the best social intentions in behalf of human animals whom they actually helped to define as the mere human units of quantitative social science.

When scientific positivism, social Darwinism, and naturalism appeared in this country, those who tried to consider their meaning and effect on our conception of ourselves were singularly hampered. The Jacksonian period had been, in social actuality, loose and open; the practical independence of individuals was taken for granted by our visionaries. Its diminution after the Civil War left the practical self of daily life at the mercy of impersonal systems of thought—and of economic systems created by business. The Emersonian two-story self, when faced with the notion of impersonal force, was not equipped to fight back. In any case, it was the deprecated lower story that had been invaded, and our essential value did not lie there. Like the Emerson of the essay "Experience," we, the notoriously practical Americans, did not hold the region of practice primary; freedom and power did not center there, but in the upper story. Yet if values were indeed divorced from action how could they be fought for and shared? Our religious impulse immobilized us. Positivism and impersonal force came to define the

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realm of action, and the exacerbated Emersonian visionary contrived such forms of union with the practical as the painful irony of "Christian Science," "New Thought," or the muddle of Frank Norris's *The Octopus,* in which the willed religiosity of a Vanamee is set over against the flux of biological and economic forces. These are rather desperate lapses on the part of the visionary: individual religious claims are said to exert a force in the world of practice.

In considering the American's inner division, and his recurring impulse to make a religious use of the very fact of his personal existence, I have often used the first person plural. This use of "we" confers no authority; in fact it is the preliminary and wholly necessary acknowledgment that, if we are to say that our culture exists, we must also say that as its members we have acted in ways we can describe. An acknowledgment of the fact is required if we are to act together, and to further the values we share. A conscious recognition of our negation of ourselves both as members of the polity and as the agents of change is the condition of our future freedom.

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The Power of Movie Critics

STEPHEN FARBER

Now that movie critics have become media celebrities, they are more highly feared than ever before. In promoting *Shampoo,* Warren Beatty spent several weeks in New York courting all the major critics. His concern about reviews testifies to the rise of the movie critic as superstar. But how much power do the critics actually have? That question has intrigued studio executives, filmmakers, and audiences, and it requires a complicated answer.

Critics have traditionally played a significant role in securing an audience for foreign films. In the case of Hollywood movies, critics sometimes have an indirect influence on the box office. When the executives at Universal first saw *American Graffiti,* they were bewildered and unenthusiastic because the movie did not have a conventional plot. Early previews allayed some of their fears, but they remained apprehensive until rave reviews persuaded them that they had a more important film than they had realized. Then they decided to mount a major advertising campaign, an effort that succeeded handsomely. As one of the critics who championed the film, I have no illusions about the extent of our influence. *American Graffiti* opened at a time when the young audience was looking for a nostalgic escape from the frustrations of the last decade; the film touched a popular nerve, and that is why it succeeded. The only role the critics played was in encouraging the studio to promote the movie.

One can compare the fate of *American Graffiti* to that of another low-budget comedy, *Smile,* a satiric look at a beauty contest in a small California town very close to where *American Graffiti* was shot. Since *Smile* was a much harsher comedy than *American Graffiti,* it probably did not have the same commercial potential. Nevertheless, when I saw *Smile* at an early sneak preview, the reaction was extremely enthusiastic, and I believe there could have been an audience for the movie. Instead it has been a commercial disaster, and I think its failure has something to do with the reviews. The early reviews of *Smile* were lukewarm or downright hostile, and this indifferent reception persuaded the studio to dump the movie as quickly as possible, rather than search for the imaginative advertising campaign that it needed in order to succeed.

As this comparison suggests, the major element determining the box-office performance of a film is advertising, although the innate popular appeal of the movie—what the industry calls "word of mouth"—is obviously significant too. Critics have some influence, but their power is circumscribed. In the last few years, several of the films most highly praised by the critics—*Mean Streets, Badlands, The Conversation, Thieves Like Us*—have fared poorly at the box office. Even *Nashville,* which probably won the best reviews of any American movie of the last decade, petered out after its first few weeks in release. It will turn a small profit because it was made on a relatively low budget, but its grosses were disappointing considering the send-off it received from the critics. In the case of *Nashville,* the rave reviews may actually have backfired. Audiences went to the movie with such a high sense of anticipation that many of them felt cheated by what they saw; they were more keenly disappointed because the movie fell so

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far short of what the critics had promised.

On the other hand, bad reviews could not keep people away from *The Sound of Music, Airport, Love Story, The Exorcist, Magnum Force,* or *Mandingo,* to name just a few of the movies that succeeded without any help from the critics. One of the most interesting examples of the divergence between critical and popular reaction was *The Great Gatsby*. Probably the most overpromoted movie of our time, *Gatsby* fell victim to a predictable backlash from critics. Yet despite the disastrous reviews, the film was still very successful at the box office; it had grossed over $25 million by the end of 1974. The publicity clearly overwhelmed the terrible reviews.

Or consider the case of *Mahogany,* another wretched, poorly reviewed movie that clicked at the box office. During its first week of release in New York, Paramount mounted a full-scale TV advertising blitz and promoted the film heavily in black areas. This helped boost attendance to a record level. In subsequent openings around the country, Paramount advertised the movie as a record-breaking phenomenon and included photographs of hordes of people waiting in line to get into the New York theaters. These ads apparently convinced a great many people that, good or bad, *Mahogany* was a movie they could not afford to miss. By the time "word of mouth" began to work against the movie, it was already a hit. The reviews certainly could not compete with the publicity machine. As Pauline Kael wrote in a diatribe against the power of advertising: "The businessmen have always been in control of film production; now advertising puts them, finally, on top of public reaction as well. They can transcend the content and the quality of a film by advertising."

However, if the evidence suggests that reviews carry little weight at the box office, that is not the same as saying that critics are out of touch with the public. On the contrary, the close correlation between critical and popular success on a large number of recent films—*The Godfather: Part II, Young Frankenstein, Alice Doesn't Live Here Any More, Shampoo, Tommy, Return of the Pink Panther, Jaws, Love and Death, Dog Day Afternoon*—suggests that critics often reflect popular taste. *Jaws,* for example, was such a carefully engineered scare show that it would have been a huge success regardless of the reviews. But it is interesting to note that the critics were just as enthusiastic as the teen-agers squealing in horror at the grisly special effects. In some cases the critics can reinforce popular taste. Films such as *Last Tango in Paris* and *Shampoo* probably had enough graphic sex to succeed, with or without critical endorsements; the rave reviews supplied the patina of intellectual respectability that turned both films into controversial cocktail party conversation pieces.

The critics do have power, but it is more subtle and complex than box-office receipts can register. Andrew Sarris, for example, has had a significant impact on younger critics and film students; his influence cannot be measured by his limited readership in the *Village Voice*. In the universities Sarris's *auteur* theory—a theory borrowed from French critics that identifies the director as "author" of a film—has had tremendous sway. Over a long period these ideas will gradually filter down to a larger public. Already one can point to some concrete influence of Sarris's criticism. Regular moviegoers are much more knowledgeable about directors today than they were ten years ago; the cult of the film director owes much of its impetus to Sarris. In addition, young screenwriters and directors who learned to "appreciate" Hollywood movies in film school have begun making their own movies in self-conscious imitation of the films that Sarris and other *auteur* critics praised. (Peter Bogdanovich is the prime example of the *auteur*-film-buff turned filmmaker.)

In New York literary circles, Pauline Kael is the most widely read critic, and her ideas also reach many people besides the subscribers to *The New Yorker*. Like Sarris, she has several young disciples who are writing criticism. Beyond that, Kael's reviews influence many of the movie feature stories and personality profiles in the mass circulation newspapers and magazines, and her opinions affect all her fellow critics. Anyone who doubts Pauline Kael's power over other critics should consider this year's awards by the two critics' circles, the New York Film Critics and the National Society of Film Critics. Kael's personal favorites of the year—*Nashville, The Story of Adele H,* and *Shampoo*—swept

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all the major awards in both groups. Because some of these awards—like the National Society's designation of *Shampoo* as Best Screenplay of 1975—were rather preposterous, Kael's ability to intimidate other critics seems alarming. Ironically, she has become the doyenne of the New York critics at a time when many of her once-loyal readers have begun to have serious doubts about her views.

There is something incestuous about the New York critical world. Word travels fast, and before a movie has opened, most critics will know what Kael or Sarris or John Simon thought of it. Once favorable reports begin to circulate, few critics will buck the consensus; they all rush to jump aboard the bandwagon, competing to see who can find the most glowing superlatives. The excellent reviews for a trifling, seriously flawed film like *Hearts of the West* can only be understood in terms of this snowball effect. *Hearts of the West* is a pleasant, innocuous minor film with not nearly enough substance or bite. But it is the kind of movie—a small, warm, humanistic comedy—that critics *wanted* to like, and so they conveniently overlooked the flaws. Intelligent moviegoers who see the film and try to fathom the rave reviews can be forgiven for suspecting a critical conspiracy. There used to be more vigorous disagreement among critics. Now that most of them have been paralyzed by the fear of being out of step, their reviews are, with a few exceptions, monotonously consistent.

When the critics disagree, their motives are equally suspect. Sometimes critics perversely react against a film that other critics have endorsed. But whether the critics are trying to please or infuriate their peers, their reviews are unreliable because they often seem to be responding to each other rather than to the film.

The actual extent of the critics' power is difficult to calculate, but there is another side to this question that deserves investigation—the ways in which the critic's desire for power affects his or her writing. A critic's position is inevitably frustrating; he sends out his reviews as if they were notes dropped overboard in the middle of the ocean—there is no guarantee that they will ever reach shore. I suspect that most critics want more influence over moviegoers and moviemakers, and this is at least in part an understandable and healthy impulse. A good critic wants to encourage people to support worthwhile and innovative films rather than the simpleminded, well-publicized trash that is always at a premium. The danger arises when critics see their names on marquees and are invited to appear on talk shows. Before long, their own fantasies of power complicate and undermine their sincere desire to support better films.

To understand the new phenomenon of critic as superstar, it is necessary to consider Pauline Kael's famous review of *Last Tango in Paris*—perhaps the first time in film history when one review became the basis for the entire advertising campaign on a film. Kael's ecstatic review of *Last Tango* several months before its opening—in which she compared its first showing at the New York Film Festival to the premiere of Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du Printemps* in 1913—was reprinted in its entirety in ads for the movie, and both *Time* and *Newsweek* did cover stories on the film, largely because of Kael's advance trumpet blast. Although *Last Tango* might have been a hit even without her review—it came at the perfect moment, just when the public was ready for a sex film with pretensions—Kael helped to turn the movie into a major cultural and sociological event. The extravagant tone of her review set an unfortunate style for movie criticism. Since then other critics, tantalized by the media attention that Kael received, have begun to acclaim more and more movies in the exalted terms usually reserved for the Sistine Chapel or *King Lear*.

Distributors tried reprinting long excerpts from some of Kael's other reviews—including those for *Mean Streets* and *Thieves Like Us*—in their advertising; but those movies did not have the shock value of *Last Tango in Paris*, and the ads had no effect. Yet the taste of power had a damaging influence on Kael herself. She began to compose more of her reviews in the hyperbolic style of press releases, almost as if she were writing for the advertising blurbs. In fact, in the summer of 1974, while she was on her annual hiatus from *The New Yorker*, Kael actually provided blurbs for movies—including *Going Places*, *California Split*, and *Harry and Tonto*—that she had not re-

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viewed. The entire advertising campaign for the French film *Going Places* was built around a single line from Kael: "A sexual Keystone comedy." If these were obscure movies that desperately needed a boost, Kael's willingness to supply favorable quotes might have been more understandable. But all of them had received excellent reviews from other critics. Distributors were eager to take advantage of the presumed box-office value of Kael's name; she ignored the fact that she was allowing criticism to become an instrument of advertising.

Kael clearly wants to be more involved in the marketing of movies, and in her reviews she has begun to make irrelevant financial predictions. "It's a hit, no question about it—a big, big hit," she wrote of *Serpico* (before it had opened). She predicted, prematurely, that *Nashville* was "going to take off into the stratosphere." Whether or not these prophecies turn out to be accurate, a critic has no business making commercial predictions in the first place. Such asides suggest that Kael is frustrated by reviewing and eager to extend her influence; she now fancies herself a seer.

Kael used to be a tough critic. Since she has become a movie celebrity, she has been much more generous, and one cannot help feeling that this has something to do with her superstar status. She wants her name linked with hits. Her excessive enthusiasm for so many movies cannot be dissociated from her power, her consciousness of herself as tastemaker and pundit. When she wrote that films such as *Fiddler on the Roof, The Last Picture Show, The Garden of the Finzi-Continis,* and *Cabaret* were part of an artistic renaissance, "a legendary period for movies," one knew she was losing all sense of perspective. Lately Kael has tried to inflate the movies she reviews by introducing dubious comparisons from literature and the other arts. That comparison of *Last Tango in Paris* to Stravinsky is only one example. *Thieves Like Us,* she wrote, "is so sensuous and lucid that it is as if William Faulkner and the young Jean Renoir had collaborated." *Shampoo* was "Mozartean," while the opening of *The Godfather: Part II* was "Shakespearean," and *Nashville* was compared to Joyce's *Ulysses.*

Kael's recent reviews go beyond description and analysis; there are certain directors whom she wants to "sell" to the industry and the public, and the tone of some of her reviews is hysterical and evangelical. As Joseph Gelmis wrote in criticizing her review of *Last Tango,* Kael "is a self-described 'propagandist' critic who prefers not to tell her readers about the failures of a film that she hopes to force them to see—so that she can further the career of a filmmaker whom she idolizes."

Playing the role of partisan and crusader can lead Kael to some curious distortions. After heralding Martin Scorsese as a brilliant new director—"a new Buñuel steeped in Verdi, perhaps"—in her review of *Mean Streets,* Kael felt compelled to revive the campaign for Scorsese in her review of *Alice Doesn't Live Here Any More,* despite the fact that she clearly didn't like the film very much. Her review of *Alice* was a precarious juggling act; she acknowledged the flaws of the movie but kept trying to minimize them. She had it both ways when she wrote: "One of the rare films that genuinely deserve to be called controversial. I think people will really fight about it . . . the first angry-young-woman movie." People did indeed fight about *Alice,* but chiefly because Kael's review and a few others supplied the controversy that wasn't really visible on the screen. Kael managed to transform a bland television-style situation comedy into an explosive social document.

Similarly, Kael had gone out on a limb in reviewing Steven Spielberg's first feature, *The Sugarland Express,* calling it "one of the most phenomenal debut films in the history of movies." I was curious to see how she would handle Spielberg's subsequent movie, *Jaws.* Kael is a shrewd critic who has often attacked violence in films, and I didn't see how she could fail to recognize the manipulative, exploitative nature of *Jaws.* Yet I also knew that she wasn't likely to reverse her earlier endorsement of Spielberg. Her solution to this problem was, at a minimum, ingenious. She recently labeled *Jaws* "a primal-terror comedy," thus conveniently sidestepping its sadistic appeal. *Jaws* is about as funny as an electrocution, and no one else has described it as a comedy. But Kael will apparently perform the most elaborate conjuring tricks in order to remain loyal to the directors she has championed.

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Of course her great idol is Robert Altman, and in writing about his movies she rhapsodizes like the world's biggest fan. "I don't understand how Robert Altman gets his effects any more than I understand how Renoir did," Kael gushed in her review of *Thieves Like Us*. Her uncritical devotion to Altman culminated in her review of a rough cut of *Nashville,* some three months before its scheduled release. She wanted to give this movie the kind of send-off she gave *Last Tango in Paris,* and so she decided not to wait until the film was completed.

All these developments help to explain why Kael has become so unreliable as a critic; there are too many unacknowledged drives at work when she writes that prevent us from taking her criticism at face value. Other critics are obviously susceptible to the same dreams of power, and several are far more shameless in pursuing the media. I have concentrated on Kael because I admire her and have been disturbed by the turn her career has taken. Her extraordinary gifts make her recent decline especially saddening.

In fairness, it is possible that Kael has learned something from her experience of the last few years. Her disappointment over the mild public response to *Nashville* may have sobered her. In any case her reviews in recent months—chiefly of European films that have only a limited commercial potential—have been thoughtful and restrained. Still, a consideration of Pauline Kael's career demonstrates not simply the powerlessness of movie critics in any large sense, but the dangers of the illusion of power that our media-mad age generates.

Is it possible for a big-time critic to resist these enticements? Of the critics writing regularly, one who seems to have remained immune to these pressures is Stanley Kauffmann. He has been writing solid, intelligent movie criticism for almost twenty years now, and although I have sometimes been impatient with his individual reviews, his body of work is impressive. If Pauline Kael is often too enthusiastic, Kauffmann's problem is the opposite: he lacks passion. Even when he praises a movie wholeheartedly, he holds back, as if he were afraid of appearing gauche; his coolness sometimes shrivels a reader's enthusiasm. Yet Kauffmann's native skepticism and evenhandedness are virtues that more movie critics could use. He stays off the bandwagon, and holds to his own rigorous standards. And one never has the feeling, as one sometimes does with John Simon, that Kauffmann is attacking a film merely out of perversity, or to congratulate himself on his superior wisdom; there is nothing self-righteous about his writing. Kauffmann's career is gratifying because it proves that a critic can keep working at a high level without being swayed by the lust for power or the hurly-burly atmosphere of the marketplace.

Kauffmann's conscientiousness seems likely to remain the exception. Because critics are uncertain about the extent of their influence, most of them can be seduced by the dream of power. Perhaps they have been disoriented by the rise of the television reviewer. Surveys suggest that the critic with the greatest influence on the greatest number of people is Gene Shalit of the NBC "Today" show. Except for Rex Reed, he is probably the best-known critic in America today. Following his example, many local television stations have hired movie critics. The prospects are alarming. These frustrated actors and burlesque clowns have come to personify the public's image of a critic. Their three-minute "reviews," interspersed with film clips and witless one-liners, are much easier to digest than newspaper or magazine articles, and the result is that fewer people are reading reviews. Frustrated by the prominence and popularity of the new television reviewers, many literate critics have apparently felt impelled to make the talk-show circuit themselves, and to begin writing in high-powered prose that can compete with the dithering style of the TV performers. McLuhan's electronic utopia has turned into a nightmare. Given the hysterical mood of the times, the critic who can resist these pressures is doubly valuable.

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A Cliché Poem for Your Leaving

JOHN STONE

Last things first.
I would not by the hair of my chin
utter a word against you
except to ask where in hell
is the silver lining.

No news is not necessarily

says the philosopher, pleased
with himself, his head buried,
and as always, just enough off
the mark of the real world
to appear as wise as he is old.

I hope to God

I don't pass this way again.
As it is the best place to end
was at the beginning
as it were.
For the time being

holding the short end of the stick

I mean to contemplate
only until six of one
seems once more
half a dozen.
I am well, also alive.

It's just a matter of time
until the truth
will out.
Till then, I am resigned
in name only and, as before

left to my own devices.

JOHN STONE is a physician in Atlanta, where he teaches at Emory University School of Medicine. His first book of poems is *The Smell of Matches*.

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From *A Woman and Several Windowscapes*

KIRBY MALONE

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I stretch your stocking
across the window of late afternoon,
black slat in a black frame.

A hyacinth bulb soaks in the kitchen sink.
Its green fist is a knot
halted a moment months long
before becoming frantic
to be beautiful in our life,
in our kitchen.

You move from mantel to dresser
in another room.
You can barely see what you are doing,
as the last bales of light
tumble and fold into the ground
at the other end of the house.

I touch your taut stocking,
an arrow fitted to bowstring,
a deaf man clumsily stroking a harp.

Your neck is not green
but it bends
as though toward water
in the other room.

A blue hyacinth sends its roots deeper
into a rocky mountainside pasture.

Your hand plants itself in my shoulder.
My eyes are fixed on the window.
They want to take you
and follow that migrating swan
into the wonderful world
of the world, which is ours.

KIRBY MALONE graduated from Antioch College, Baltimore, in 1975, where he was co-director of the Poetry Project. He has spent the last year in Great Britain on a Thomas J. Watson Fellowship, writing and studying poetry.

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Morris Cohen–Fifty Years Later

SIDNEY HOOK

What makes a great teacher? I believe it is the ability to inspire in students a dedication to the subject of instruction. The dedication may be expressed either in active pursuit of the discipline or in an appreciation of its results. When we look back on our schooling, we remember teachers rather than courses—we remember their manner and method, their enthusiasm and intellectual excitement, and their capacity to arouse our delight in, or curiosity about, the subject taught. Different teachers affect different students in different ways. But when students have been reached by their teacher, the response is the same—respect, admiration, and a desire to win approval. Sometimes a teacher's influence is strong enough to override that of parents and peers.

Even more than an actor, a teacher is a sculptor in snow. He is remembered only by the generations that have seen him in action or felt the effects of his presence on those who have sat at his feet. Great teachers are rare, and lucky are the students who encounter them. But they are not always great or original scholars. The popular assumptions that anyone who knows a lot about a subject can teach it effectively and that mastery in teaching inevitably develops with mastery of a subject are myths. The kind of teaching to which many students have been exposed in liberal arts colleges should have exploded those myths long ago.

One of the great teachers of the first third of our century was Morris R. Cohen of the College of the City of New York, where he taught courses in philosophy from 1912 to 1938. By conventional pedagogical standards, he would not be considered a great or even a good teacher. For he inspired only a few of his students to undertake careers in philosophy, and overawed the rest. Nonetheless his prowess as a teacher became legendary and his ideas a force in the intellectual community. Yet his classroom techniques would never have won him tenure in any public school system, and he himself confesses he was a failure in his early efforts as an elementary and secondary schoolteacher because he could not even control his classes. When he first began teaching philosophy at the college level, his manner, he says, was that of a "petty drillmaster." This proved so unsatisfactory that, lacking "verbal fluency," he adopted the Socratic method.

Although everyone praises the Socratic method, few really practice it. At its best a search for clarity in the quest for truth, it progresses by the sharpening of concepts and elimination of false hypotheses and notions. Primarily negative in impact, the Socratic method is ideally designed to undermine the dogmas, convictions, and assumptions that one has inherited from tradition and from the surrounding milieu without recognition of their alternatives or awareness of the grounds of belief on which they are founded. It is also effective in critically evaluating the challenges to tradition, the new revelations of popular religion or popular science, the glittering promises of reform and social salvation. It is particularly hard on the revolutionary fanatic who delights in discomfiting defenders of the status quo and is furious when the scalpel of analysis is inserted and twisted into the structure of his own beliefs.

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The Socratic method is not illustrated at its best in the Platonic dialogues, which too often are prolonged monologues interrupted by leading questions from friendly stooges. It cannot be employed in disciplines, like the sciences or language instruction, that aim to impart knowledge or skills, and where the cumulative development of the subject matter is essential to mastery. When progress in a field of knowledge is measured by results, those searching, provocative, and unanswerable questions about fundamentals would be considered a pleasant irrelevance. Philosophy is the best, if not the only, study in which to practice the Socratic method, provided the teacher is not interested in lecturing or preaching or transmitting a body of doctrine. The Socratic method, skillfully used, can and should be a propaedeutic to a genuine liberal education: it gives students a feeling for evidence, an awareness of what follows from what, and it instills a healthy wariness of easy generalizations, a skepticism about "what everyone knows," and an intellectual distrust of panaceas.

There are subtle and crude ways of using the Socratic method in the classroom. The subtle way invokes the spirit of "let us reason together," discovers the problem in the course of a collective inquiry, and challenges not the student but the answers. It can never be completely painless because of the sensitivity of adolescents to the judgments—and, sad to say, sometimes the gibes—of their peers. But even when a student hazards an obviously wrong answer, a skillful and kind teacher can make him feel that he has contributed to the progress of the argument by helping to eliminate a false lead.

The crude use of the Socratic method is for shock effect. During the years I studied with Morris Cohen, until, almost a decade later, he began to resort more and more to lecturing, he would use it with devastating results in the classroom. If a problem was being considered, Cohen would deny it was a genuine problem. When he restated the problem, every answer to it was rejected as vague, or confused, or ill informed if not contrary to fact, or as leading to absurd consequences when it was not viciously circular, question-begging, or downright self-contradictory. The students' answers, to be sure, were almost always what Cohen said they were while he dispatched them with a rapier or sledgehammer—and usually with a wit that delighted those who were not impaled or crushed at the moment. Cohen enjoyed all this immensely, too. There was no animus in this ruthless abortion of error, of stereotyped responses, and of the clichés and bromides that untutored minds brought to the perennial problems of philosophy. And although the students soon felt that whatever they said would be rejected, they consoled themselves with the awareness that almost everyone was in the same boat. When they were not bleeding, they enjoyed watching others bleed. Occasionally Cohen would let up on a student who had the guts and gumption to answer back; if, ignoring the laughter of his fellows, he insisted on his point in the face of Cohen's mounting impatience, that student was subsequently treated more gingerly. Or when Cohen had the answer to a moot point—an answer he was holding in reserve to trot out after he had gone through the class beheading one student response after another—he would occasionally skip the student who he suspected might supply that answer. Some of us who felt the call of philosophy and had avidly read Cohen's published articles could sometimes anticipate what he had in mind. He let us alone in class but we had our egos properly pinched in private sessions with him.

Cohen's class was often an exhilarating experience. We became logical hygienists and terrorized our friends and families, and especially other teachers, with the techniques, and sometimes the pungent expressions, that we picked up observing Cohen in action. His method was not merely a form of logic chopping, or splitting hairs pointlessly, or of talmudic exegesis with which many of his students had some familiarity. We acquired a salutary skepticism of authority in intellectual matters and were able to free ourselves of the hypnosis of the printed word in disputed matters. I recall a class in which Cohen asked us why Thales was considered the father of Western philosophy. "Because he taught that everything was made up of water" was the first answer, which repeated the words of the textbook. "Why should that make him a philosopher—no less a great

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one?" inquired Cohen. "What would you think of someone who announced that everything was made up of something else in the common world quite distinguishable from it—lead or zinc or paper?" It was agreed that he would have to be a fool or a lunatic, and since Thales was neither, the statement attributed to him was probably not meant to be taken literally. The upshot of the discussion left the student more impressed with Thales's contribution to geometry, not as a form of measurement, but as an exact logical science quite different from anything that preceded it. Students also acquired a realization that philosophy historically had embraced astronomy and other sciences, which led to a question as relevant today as it ever was: What is the relation between wisdom and knowledge, value and fact?

It was to be expected that Cohen's manner and method would periodically lead to the objection that he was merely negative and destructive, that he would rob a student of his faith, break his idols, and put nothing in their stead. Actually this was not altogether true. In the course of his unrelenting criticism, he revealed an amazing encyclopedic erudition that we all admired. It spurred many students to hunt up books they would otherwise never have read. Until smitten with a stroke in 1940, Cohen had a fabulous memory and, in his prime, an almost complete recall of the libraries of literature he had read. The range of his erudition was the despair of the most ambitious of us—history, biology, law, the physical sciences, comparative literature, theology and biblical criticism, not to speak of all the mansions of philosophy. He could suggest a bibliography for every topic or project, and all students, except those who were completely alienated by his devastating negativism, profited immensely.

Further, although Cohen was the personification of the nay-sayer, he gave his students evidence that philosophical thinking counted in all fields and disciplines; that intelligent doubt and skepticism did not arise out of ignorance but only on the basis of some knowledge; and that even though all definitions presuppose that some terms are undefinable, and all demonstrations assume some propositions that are indemonstrable, there are reasonable grounds for accepting what is undefinable and indemonstrable.

Where his teaching was concerned, Cohen resolutely defended his conception of the vocation of a teacher (at least on the undergraduate level) as a sanitation engineer sent into the world to free students' minds of intellectual rubbish. In a famous story he related quite often, a student reproached him for being merely negative. Cohen retorted: "You have heard how Hercules cleaned the Augean stables. He took all the dirt and manure out and left them clean. You ask me, 'What did he leave in their stead?' I answer, 'Isn't it enough to have cleaned the stables?' " None of us thought—or dared—to make what would have been an appropriate retort: "Of course! But Hercules was no philosopher! A philosopher, you have led us to believe, is full of—wisdom."

Looking back on those days and years, I am shocked at the insensitivity and actual cruelty of Cohen's teaching method, and even more shocked at my indifference to its true character when I was his student. I was among those who spread the word, in speech and writing, about his inspiring teaching and helped make him a legendary figure who was judged and admired for his reputation rather than his actual classroom performance. Only when I myself became a teacher did I realize that the virtues of his method could be achieved without the browbeating, sarcasm, and absence of simple courtesy that marked his dialectical interrogations. It is true that he inspired me. He was the first teacher to command my intellectual respect and the first to greet my opposition to America's entry into the war and my questioning of subsequent American foreign policy with anything other than the ferocious antipathy of my high school and City College teachers. Toughened as I was as a street brawler and political activist, I thoroughly enjoyed our give-and-take—although I almost always took more than I gave. But he needlessly hurt too many others in what was for him a form of theater. His religion, his accent, and his irascibility denied him an opportunity to teach in the graduate school of a great university. That is where he really belonged and where the challenge of mature minds would have enabled him to fulfill what he professed was his overwhelming desire—to pursue systematic phi-

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losophy. He compensated for the bitterness and deprivation of his lot by playing God in the classroom.

To his credit, Cohen acknowledged in later years that his way of giving students a proper appreciation of the depths of their ignorance left scars. He even related the comment of one student who, asked for an evaluation of Cohen's course, responded: "Justice Holmes said he envied the youth who sat at your feet. It is evident that he never took a course with you." Cohen spoiled the account by interpreting these lapses as an indication that he was "a hard and exacting taskmaster." He readily acknowledged that he deserved this reputation, implying that the great outpouring of "affection and esteem" from his students proved he could not have hurt them very much. One can, however, be "a hard and exacting taskmaster" without the show of irritated impatience and discourtesy that bordered on cruelty.

Although he was not above making a student the butt of a joke, the wit was so apposite and brilliant that it often deadened the victim's pain. Cohen was not a sadist. He did not mean to hurt anyone; and in the years when I could observe him closely, he was obviously unaware of how he affected students. One day a group of us were standing in animated coversation in the marble corridor of the college after an exciting hour with Cohen. After a while Cohen came along, obviously in fine fettle. Catching sight of us, he came over, turned to one of the students present, and said, "The trouble with you, A, is that you can't think." I can still see that student blanch at this sentence of doom pronounced before his peers. And I blush to think that, so great was Cohen's authority with us, we didn't hold this judgment against him but against the hapless victim. Yes, Cohen unwittingly left scars, and as I discovered when I ran into this student a decade later, some of the scars did not heal. It was all so gratuitous for a man who sincerely believed that he had respect for the personality of each of his students. His worst lapses may have occurred when he was plagued by ill health.

When he became aware that any of the students he came to know were in trouble or distress his manner was gentle and kind. Informed that the father of one of the members of our group had died, his letter of condolence was as effective as it was unexpected in sustaining the bereft student. And although my penchant for prolonged disputation with him, intensified as a result of his own teaching, vexed him sorely, especially when I myself began publishing and teaching, he sought, out of genuine personal concern, to dissuade me from taking heedless political positions that jeopardized my future and that of my dependents.

At a famous dinner for Cohen on the occasion of his twenty-fifth anniversary as a teacher at CCNY, all the notables in philosophy turned out to defend him against a rumored threat from the new president of his institution. When Cohen himself made an eloquent speech on his method of teaching undergraduates, he spoke of the service that philosophy can render in education by functioning as "a logical disinfectant."

It was a greater philosopher, Alfred North Whitehead, who remarked in another connection, "One cannot live on a diet of disinfectants"—especially in philosophy. Cohen was well aware that philosophy was vision, and that, at best, the purpose of logical techniques was to work out the details of the vision or to test its deliverances. The legacy of the great philosophers consists not in what they deny or reject but in what they see and affirm. Cohen, too, had visions and insights that, despite himself, shone through the dazzling intellectual swordplay of the classroom. He had great wisdom about the affairs of the world, despite his emphasis upon the virtue of professional detachment, and he had a moral courage that, in the perspective of academic behavior in our time, glows more strongly with the years. Wisdom was apparent in his writing and moral courage in his stance on various controversial issues.

His moral courage was evinced shortly after the First World War when he published his *A Slacker's Apology*—and to be a self-denominated slacker during that period was an invitation to some sort of violence. This moral courage was manifest in his criticism of the revolutionary fanaticism of those who had earlier shared his socialist ideals; in his persistent rejection, until the day of his death, of political Zionism as a form of tribalism—to the acute distress of many of his friends

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and admirers; in his struggle against the administrative tyranny of his own institution; in his gallant defense of Bertrand Russell, who was denied an appointment at the City College because of an ignorant magistrate and a cowardly mayor—and this despite Cohen's own original disapproval of the appointment; in his refusal to kowtow to, or be silenced by, some extremist students of the mid-thirties. I am sure that he would not have survived the academic life of the sixties. His unquenchable spirit of liberalism, his commitment to tolerance and academic freedom, his mordant criticism of all varieties of fanaticism would have enraged the student extremists and other barbarians of virtue who violently disrupted classrooms and libraries, seized and vandalized offices, and made a mockery of the freedom to teach, learn, and listen. Whatever else his colleagues and administrators would have done, Cohen would not have yielded.

The cultural climate of the country has changed so much in the last fifty years that it is difficult for even the middle-aged to recall the parochial atmosphere in which it was more hazardous to a man's career, especially in philosophy, to call himself an atheist than a socialist. Cohen, though, called himself an atheist and ironically claimed that most modernist Protestant theologians really did not differ with him. At the same time he had a profound sympathy and understanding for the symbols of religion, and contested the current Marxist vulgarization of its role in life as merely a soporific for the masses. In this as in some other social matters he reflected the influence of George Santayana, whose masterpiece, *The Life of Reason,* Cohen used as a text for more than twenty years in his course, The Philosophy of Civilization. The wisdom of *The Life of Reason* never stales on rereading. It was a book to which Cohen owed more than to any other.

What struck me about Cohen seemed just as true of Santayana. Despite so many theories that emphatically declare the opposite, there appeared to be no organic connection between either man's wisdom and his personality. Had Santayana met Cohen in his mature years, he would have detested him, not only because Santayana was an ill-concealed anti-Semite but because of Cohen's unqualified liberalism in the age of Mussolini, Franco, and Stalin, all of whom were Santayana's political heroes. To be sure, Santayana was scornful of Hitler, but because he was a German, not because he was a Nazi.

II

If one were to read contemporary American philosophy, one would hardly suspect that Morris Cohen had ever lived because there are so few references to him. This is somewhat surprising because Cohen's books are easily obtainable and the subjects he discussed, like the philosophy of law, history, and the scientific method, have moved into the center of philosophic interest. A fair number of his students have become professional philosophers, but they have not built on Cohen's work or even referred to it. Instead, they have developed on their own after initially transferring their allegiance to Dewey, Whitehead, G. F. Moore, and others. Herbert Schneider, Joseph Ratner, Morton White, Lewis Feuer, Paul Weiss, and, most distinguished of all, Ernest Nagel have been properly respectful but have not continued Cohen's work in any noticeable way.

Perhaps the chief reason why Cohen's intellectual light seems to have dimmed in American philosophy is that he was primarily a teacher of undergraduates. After all, it is in graduate school that students mature professionally, develop lasting interests, cluster around leading scholars, and become associated with schools of thought. The undergraduate experience is never specialized enough. Cohen boasted that he never sought disciples, but it would be hard to find systematic doctrines that one could identify as constituting a Cohenian philosophy. Despite his boast, it rankled when he observed his best students falling under the influence of Dewey (against whose views he thought he had immunized them) or becoming sympathetic to the logical empiricisms of Rudolf Carnap and Hans Reichenbach. For some years he was proud of Paul Weiss, who staunchly resisted both trends, but was scandalized when Weiss suddenly plumped for the existence of God.

The ambivalent feelings Cohen harbored toward Dewey may have arisen in part from disappointed expectations with respect to Columbia University. He once told me that Dewey, if he had really wanted to, could have

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arranged for Cohen to join the department of philosophy at Columbia. I asked Dewey about this, and it turned out that by the time Dewey had gotten to know Cohen well, he had dropped the reins of control in the department. The person who really barred Cohen from a post at Columbia was F. J. E. Woodbridge, Cohen's first graduate teacher in philosophy—perhaps more for social reasons than for any others. Cohen was a diamond in the rough, unpolished and argumentative; and in the critical years of Cohen's career, the brooding presence of Nicholas Murray Butler, the staid and ultraconservative president of Columbia, made itself felt, especially in philosophy.

There probably was another reason why Cohen was never called to the university post he deserved—a reason hinted at rather than stated directly: Cohen was an irrepressible talker. He outtalked everyone at every meeting in which an exchange was being carried on, and invariably insisted on having the last word. His talk was good, very good, but colleagues had difficulty getting their own words in. Students, of course, never minded this, but not all of Cohen's auditors were students. Then, too, Cohen was always the lion on social occasions, much to the distress of his hosts, who had invited other lions too. The historian J. Salwyn Schapiro, a colleague of Cohen's at CCNY, once bitterly compared Cohen to a member of a disadvantaged Harlem group whose exploits at the time were making the press. "He always brings his razor to a party!" he complained.

Other echoes of this reaction from Cohen's professional peers reached me at the New York Philosophy Club, which I was invited to join in the late thirties. The club was an organization of a select group of philosophers in the East, founded around the turn of the century by Felix Adler. Papers were read and discussed at the monthly dinner meetings, held at the Columbia Faculty Club. I was puzzled by its rule of procedure. After a paper was read in the late afternoon, the remaining time before dinner was divided equally among all the members for individual comment and criticism. Everyone spoke, even if he had nothing to say. The speaker then rejoined in a brief summary. There was little real give-and-take. When I inquired about the reason for this obviously unsatisfactory procedure, I was told that it had been adopted after Cohen joined the club and that it was devised as the only way to prevent him from monopolizing the discussion and turning it into a debate between himself and the speaker.

I suspect that in the early years, before Cohen mellowed, this may explain why those who were eager to have Cohen as a visitor to their campuses were not as enthusiastic about having him as a permanent colleague. This was a great pity. Earlier recognition in a university milieu would probably have resulted in the development of a more collegial *modus vivendi,* and a more systematic analysis of what he regarded as the perennial problems of philosophy.

Nonetheless, Cohen's intellectual gifts were so outstanding that he became a dominant figure in the cultural life of New York City. Not only was the range of his interests almost universal, in contrast with the narrow technical concerns of most philosophers—concerns which Cohen never depreciated—but he was undoubtedly the most incisive and formidable critic of his time. He had an unerring eye for the weakness of any position, and since all positions on fundamental questions have weaknesses, Cohen always had something to say that was unfailingly right. There is more in the world than we can ever say about it, and Cohen, in addition to possessing a highly developed sense for contradiction and a superb dialectical skill, had a keen eye for what was left out, for what received too much or too little emphasis. He was death on the monisms and absolutisms and reductionisms of his time. Especially before an audience, he could easily silence, even if he could not convince, the psychoanalysts, behaviorists, dualists, Marxists, Spenglerians, technocrats, free-willists, necessitarians, Bergsonians, classic rationalists, Baconian empiricists, supernaturalists, anarchists, subjectivists, relativists, and natural law dogmatists who crossed his path. Dewey once remarked that the only thing he had against Cohen was his undue fear lest someone agree with him.

Cohen was incomparable as a judicial critic. If I ever wanted to find out what was wrong with a paper I had written, I would

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bring it to him. But as an interpretative critic he was quite unsatisfying, and sometimes unfair. Because of his passion for immediate clarity, he rarely helped in trying to find out what a person was attempting to say, to complete a vision of what had been only glimpsed or poorly expressed in assisting an idea struggling to be born. When I once told him how Dewey would make every student who raised a question feel he had said something deeply significant because Dewey would see so much in it, Cohen retorted that Dewey was contributing to intellectual delinquency. He would cheerfully admit that a good cause could be defended by bad arguments, but insisted that it was not his responsibility to establish that the cause was good. Occasionally, however, he would reformulate a position in a paradoxical way and argue for it with great ingenuity—for example, his view that the law is only and always what the judge says it is.

Morris Cohen was a critical genius wise enough to realize that the truly great philosopher must have creative vision and the power to embody it in detail. The secret sorrow of his life was that he lacked the creative gifts of so many thinkers to whom he felt intellectually superior. Those of his books that are still instructive consist largely of essays published at different times for widely diverse occasions and stitched together around some central theme. Only one, *The Meaning of Human History,* is a unified work, but it does not fulfill the promise that his vast knowledge of history and the social disciplines, and his deep reflection on human ideals, gave those who remember his remarkable course on The Philosophy of Civilization a right to expect. Its composition was delayed too long, and was completed and delivered by his son, Felix, as the Carus Lectures. The brilliant and pioneering text, *An Introduction to Logic and Scientific Method,* was essentially the work of Ernest Nagel, his ablest student, who to Cohen's disappointment repudiated Cohen's ontological conception of logic.

Although Cohen was aware that his forte consisted in criticism, suggestive generalization, and the discovery and posing of problems rather than in creative analysis, he was, despite frequent professions of intellectual humility, rarely inhibited by modesty. He claims to have coined a beatitude: "Blessed are those who are not modest: they shall not need any devices to call attention to themselves and their modesty." At the famous dinner in his honor in 1927, Cohen, who was just forty-seven and had still to publish a book, was praised to the skies by some of the greatest men of the age. But Bertrand Russell, when invited to attend, didn't know who Cohen was (Cohen had met him once and may have written to him) and had even forgotten the occasion when I questioned him about it fifteen years later. He had consented to come for a moderate fee, and gave a clever talk on the basis of a hasty reading of some of Cohen's reprints that the organizing committee had left at his hotel. Einstein sent a cablegram and Justice Holmes a letter. Harold Laski sent a letter that was not read by Felix Frankfurter, the toastmaster, and Cohen once told me why: Laski had written that "among philosophical minds in America no one has done more penetrating or more creative work" than Cohen. Frankfurter, despite Cohen's urging, refused to read the letter in the presence of Woodbridge and Dewey. " 'Why won't you read it?' I asked him. 'It's true!' " It was, however, published in the tribute that contained the proceedings of the affair.

Cohen never responded kindly to criticism of his thought. Not that there was much criticism of it. I believe I was the only one who published an extended critical analysis of his basic philosophy, and he never really forgave me for it. Although urged by some of his students and colleagues to respond to it, for once he made no rejoinder. My piece was an article-review, written for the *Journal of Philosophy,* of Cohen's magnum opus, *Reason and Nature,* whose title was selected to contrast with Dewey's *Experience and Nature.* The editors of the *Journal* had sent the book to me at Cohen's request because on Cohen's fiftieth birthday in 1930 I had published an encomium on his philosophy in the *New Republic* that Cohen praised as a masterly exposition of the *disjecta membra* of his thoughts. My article-review appeared in the first issue of the *Journal,* January 1932. In the first part I paid him unmeasured tribute. In the second part I was critical of some fundamental ambiguities in his conception of reason and logic in na-

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ture, his notion of invariance, and his use of the principle of polarity to dispraise life, experience, and novelty. The piece was respectful, in places flattering, and, compared with some of Cohen's critical onslaughts of others' views, rather gentle.

When I met Cohen a few weeks later, the first thing he said to me, in sharp tones, was, "I knew I shouldn't have given you an A in my course in the Philosophy of Science!"—which I had taken ten years before! Elsewhere I have related Dewey's reaction to the review and Cohen's reaction to the news of it. It so happened that when Cohen rebuked me I had in my pocket a letter received that very day from John Elof Boodin, a philosopher whose metaphysical writings Cohen highly respected. In it he said rather extravagant things about the tone, the fairness, and the generosity of my criticism of Cohen. He concluded with the hope that someone would review his own books in the same way, saying he would then die content. But Cohen would not be mollified. He insisted that I had been unfair. "Boodin is pouring it on just to get you to write about him." After that we never met without heated arguments about almost everything—Hegel, Marx, Dewey, religion, politics. I was with him at Vassar when he had his first heart attack—fortunately unrelated to any argument—and helped in getting him medical aid.

III

Looking back at the end of a life which is now longer than Cohen's own, I find my memory of him stronger than ever, and pervaded with a sense of the continuing significance of his thought—thought worthy of attention that it is not receiving. The pettiness of the man falls away as an amusing incidence of his mortality. (I once suggested to him that he had been too harsh with Harry Overstreet, his long-suffering departmental chairman, whose divorce he had publicly and needlessly criticized, and that even philosophically he had underestimated him. Cohen remarked: "Don't misunderstand me. Overstreet's a big man. After all, it takes a big man to resign himself to living with a still bigger man under him.") In perspective, his wisdom was more important than his person.

In what did Cohen's wisdom consist? It is hard to say without making it appear rather banal. He was more of a moralist and philosopher of life than an original epistemologist or metaphysician. He knew what was important in human affairs, and yet he also knew that human affairs were not the only things of importance. He denied that man was the measure of all things. Aware of man's finitude and inescapable limitations, he warned of the dangers of cosmic egoism, of overweening ambition, and the easy optimism of both sacred and secular theologies. He recognized the reality and inexpugnability of evil. "There are whorehouses in the world and hell underneath them," he would remind students in the gay twenties when the country was on a speculation spree and everyone's prospects seemed rosy and assured. His favorite Hebrew prophets were Amos and Micah, who stressed justice and righteousness above the forms and rituals of conventions, which, he insisted, were themselves not to be despised. Yet he cautioned against the fanaticism of virtue, too. With an eye on those of us who believed that piecemeal reforms were inadequate, a compromise with the ideals of the good society, he would speak of the injustices that could result from the quest for absolute justice. He even criticized the moral extremism of Kant, who would rather permit the world to be destroyed than tolerate the unjust punishment and suffering of the innocent. He put things in perspective by reminding us that "we must all be prepared to suffer and be punished for the sins of others; otherwise we are not entitled to the benefits which we all do derive from the virtue of others." This was not, of course, a counsel to accept the remediable sufferings and injustices of the world but a consolatory reflection that made it easier to bear living in a world that contained so much irremediable evil.

Cohen had read too much history to be optimistic about man or to harbor any illusions about his inherent goodness. As a naturalist he was completely out of sympathy with any notions of original sin, but he recognized that, along with the possibility of rational reconstruction of self and social institutions, we had to take note of an element of intractability in human beings, a kind of perversity, or a will to illusion, that would almost

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ensure the presence of a pyromaniac in any Utopia. He was a firm believer in the objective existence of chance, in what the Germans call *die Tücke des Objekts*—the malice of objects. He would remark that jealousy and envy were natural to man—even to dogs—although their expression could be socially controlled. The upshot of all this was an unillusioned view of man as a "crooked stick" that brought Cohen close to the great ironists of human behavior.

Cohen's mind was always interesting to those whom he encountered. It had a quality of freshness and originality about it that stemmed from his challenges to what appeared to most people, in areas in which they were not expert, as plausible and self-evident. Einstein found his remarks about politics and history fascinating, and great jurists, respectful of Cohen's legal erudition, found his rejection of their popular notions of science stimulating. Every specialist seemed impressed by Cohen's illuminating observations about what was outside his specialty—even when he was annoyed that Cohen had invaded his own field.

The philosophic source of Cohen's wisdom seemed to grow out of his pluralism and his doctrine of polarity. That doctrine teaches that contrary elements or factors or forces are always present in every entity and situation; and all adequate explanations and solutions to problems depend not on reducing one principle to another but on finding the appropriate balance between them—like the use of both rule and discretion in punishing or rewarding or, to use Cohen's homely illustration, braking while driving downhill. In the doctrine's most general terms, principles that are usually taken as not only opposite to, but in strife with, each other, such as "immediacy and mediation, unity and plurality, the fixed and the flux, the ideal and the real, the universal and particular, the actual and possible, et cetera, like the north and south poles of a magnet, all involve each other when applied to any significant entity." Technically, the doctrine stems from Hegel's views on Essence; and, stated abstractly, it does not offer any guide to thought or conduct. It requires a wisdom that does not derive from philosophy—and whose source we do not know—to apply the principle of polarity.

The dexterity with which Cohen applied the principle of polarity reflected his familiarity with concrete situations and his wide reading. If he had read less he surely would have written more, but his reading gave him a stock of information, examples, and anecdotes that made it risky to generalize about anything in a discussion with him. There was no tincture of cynicism in his skeptical attitude toward all large claims. For him skepticism was not the foundation of knowledge, but its crown. He was among the first to popularize the fallibilism of Charles Peirce and to realize the devastating significance of Roberto Michels's "iron law of oligarchy" for any naïve conception of democracy. Many of his students were indeed naïve, including the flaming radicals who were drawn to communism by its rhetoric about "true" democracy.

Cohen was sometimes wrong about facts. I once heard him say that from what he remembered about the Russian *moujik*, it was doubtful that a *moujik* would ever learn to drive a tractor. But he was right about much more important things in the Soviet Union, although even he, I believe, would have been as shocked by the revelations of the horrors of the Gulag Archipelago as he was by the grim details of Hitler's holocaust. He had always scoffed at the notion that to a liberal there was any principled difference between fascism and communism. He had a crisp reply to those who tried to explain the transformation of their dream of a Soviet Union into a Stalinist nightmare on the ground of special historical, psychological, and political circumstances. They reminded him, he said, of the retort of some Christian apologists to Gibbon—that Christianity had not failed because it had never been tried.

Morris Cohen was a liberal for all times and seasons, by which I mean that his liberalism, like that of Spinoza, was not tied to any set of doctrines or programs or party platforms. He didn't like the expression "the open mind" because too many people with empty minds, unable to distinguish between the improbable and impossible or to avoid a simple fallacy of conversion, would boast of their open-mindedness. But the mind of the authentic liberal is open to the consideration of any or all ideas relevant to a problem. He is tolerant of dissenting opinion even when it is

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necessary vigorously to criticize mischievously false opinion. He is aware of how the issue looks to the other side or interest—even when it is necessary to rule against it. Cohen had that kind of open mind when he was writing on philosophical and social issues, but not when he was teaching undergraduates.

Although in educational matters and psychological insight Cohen lagged far behind John Dewey, he would admit that Dewey's faith in the use of intelligence, and its imaginative projection to widen the circles of shared human experience, was the true faith of the liberal. But since he was loath to agree completely with anyone, he would declare that Dewey seemed to underplay, if not to ignore, the darker sides of human nature. Reinhold Niebuhr persistently made the same kind of criticism of Dewey. When I once related the gist of that criticism to Dewey, he plaintively asked, in an idiom he rarely used, "Do I have to believe that every man is born a sonofabitch even before he acts like one, and regardless of why and how he becomes one?"

There was one emotional quality in Cohen's thought that he apparently developed after my student days. Perhaps it was dormant then, never openly expressed, but its presence in his autobiography is both strong and striking. This was his love of America—an America of which he had been an acidulous critic from the very first day he arrived on the lower East Side of New York at the age of twelve. In the light of the hopes and illusions the immigrants brought with them to these shores there was plenty to criticize in American life, especially in the eyes of those who dwelled in the slums and whose families worked in the sweatshops. There was the hostility to foreign ethnic groups, the active and sometimes illegal opposition to trade unions, the hysteria and occasional mob violence against social dissenters, not to mention the unhappy history of the treatment of Indians and Negroes. With all these things and many more, as a result of his observation and omnivorous reading, Cohen became quite familiar.

Looking back at American history, however, from the perspective of his harvest years in the late thirties, in a world made dark by the threat of totalitarian power, he was impressed by the achievements, the progress, and, above all, the promise of the American experience. He saw the future of liberal civilization bound up with America's survival and its ability to make use of the heritage of human rights formulated by Jefferson and Lincoln.

Cohen's vision may have been sharpened and refocused by his increasing concern about the fate of his own people. His emphasis became quite different. Without abating any of his criticisms of existing American shortcomings and evils, he saw them in proper proportion. America had given him and countless others a chance to make good that would have been denied them anywhere else. This was no invitation to complacency. The moral task was to give others a chance to make good too. Despite the roughness, cruelty, and externalism of American life, tremendous advances had been made in his own lifetime. The lot of the common man had been improved. The nation had recognized its social responsibility to the unemployed, the aged, the fatherless, and the homeless. There was a greater appreciation for the affairs of the mind—for art, letters, music, science. America was no longer an intellectual colony of Europe. To those who cried out, "Not enough! Not enough!" and to those who painted American society as the incarnation of evil, he would point out that if the rate of progress in the next generation was the same as in the past, their grievances, to the extent that they were legitimate, would be largely met. But a reasoned belief or faith in the processes of American democracy was required to sustain the élan of improvement.

Cohen was no nationalist; he knew that no one chooses the country in which he is born. And he looked forward to the rule of enlightened world law. Yet withal, and without the slightest tincture of chauvinism, he was an American patriot, and never more fervently than when the United States was embattled during the Second World War. For him, as for Santayana, piety was "reverence for the sources of one's being." It was an emotion naturally acquired, without ideological indoctrination or blinding. Those who went beyond rational criticism and reform and denounced America, either from the standpoint of an impossibly perfectionist ideal or, more

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often, as defenders of the foreign policy of the Soviet Union, appeared to him to be violating the adage "not to spit in the waters from which one has drunk." Although he rarely made this explicit, he felt that those among his students, and in Jewish circles generally, who lapsed into this hostility *à l'outrance* were morally insensitive in disregarding the special obligation that they, like himself, were under with respect to America. Had this country not been an easily accessible refuge and sanctuary to them or their parents, they and all their kin would have perished in the ghastly brutalities of the Nazi holocaust.

Cohen's reflections on the nature of piety extended beyond mere loyalty to one's country: they embraced the very cultural matrix in which we are nurtured. Toward the end of his life, he wrote:

> None of us are self-made men and those who think they are, are generally no credit to their makers. The language in which our thinking moves, the ideals to which we are attuned in the formative years of our childhood, our habits, occupations, and pastimes, even our gestures, facial expressions and intonations, are so largely the social products of generations of teaching, that no man can understand himself and his limitations unless he understands his heritage; and it is very difficult to understand one's heritage, or anything else, unless one approaches it with a certain amount of sympathy.

The sympathy with which one approaches his heritage may become stronger or weaker as one understands it. Cohen's sympathy as well as his understanding of the American heritage became stronger with each passing year until his death. That heritage, with its faith in human rights, in tolerance of intellectual differences, in equal opportunity, and in the *moral* equality of all human beings, is as much threatened today on a world scale as it was when Morris Cohen lived and taught. His thought has become part of the American heritage that we should study and take to heart.

The Monks' Fishing House

JAMES COLE

Remembering their promises, the monks
Conceived with unspectacular ingenuity
An easy way to fish and meditate,
One ear towards Heaven, one the stream,
And when the weighted net rang a bell,
All thought aside, through the trapdoor
A monk reached into the cold water
Holding back his sleeve, and saw
How God had blessed him with a meal
As much for being clever as devout,
although
He looked it squarely in the eye
And, like a cat, stripped it clean
Without so much as grace—its thin bones
Like a fern, exquisite that fish head.

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Fear of Food

RUTH GAY

In the 1960s we all went to school to Julia Child. Even the humblest supermarket magazine explained how it was possible to be a French chef with ingredients no farther away than the market's own shelves. As a nation we were, as one looks back on it, in our Mannerist period, when the only thing worth doing was something that was difficult. We saw the revival of billiards, bargello embroidery, and bonzai tree cultivation. We are in another decade now, and all that has survived of Julia Child in the 1970s is the elaborate French bread recipe from her second volume: a recipe so difficult that it has confounded a generation of hopeful bakers and sent them willingly back to Wonder Bread and the *Peanut-Butter Gourmet*.

Supermarket shelves, the great barometer of what America eats, all seem to be colored brown now. Instant cereals, white flours, refined sugars appear solemnly packaged in their tan sacks to persuade us that there has been hardly any intervention between the manure that nourished them and the recycled paper that wraps them. What is this flight into the natural, the coarse, all about? Dr. Reuben, who told us all we ever wanted to know about sex, now tells us what we need to know about our health—or, more properly, about our digestion. And here, too, we learn that we have been too refined, our food too delicate, our palates too exquisite. With him, we are back to seeing man as a machine, and the machine, it seems, requires a certain amount of grit to keep functioning. This theory, based on a study by a pair of English investigators, is obviously an idea whose time has come. It was first presented in the popular press in the winter of 1974 in England. By the spring of 1975 it was getting a lot of attention in the German newspapers and feature stories in the women's magazines. By last summer, it was in full bloom in the United States.

These days, then, when Americans talk about food, they are not talking about something good to eat. They are talking about their health, or the stress of modern life, or about the world's surviving. A great fear has overwhelmed us in the last decade, as we have begun to contemplate not only the atom, but also ineradicable pollution, indestructible poison gases, harmful chemicals irretrievably soaked into the food chain. Less than two decades ago, when we feared the war and nuclear destruction epitomized in *Dr. Strangelove*, people sat in living rooms in the capitals of the world drawing concentric circles around their homes, calculating the distance of a weekend retreat from flash damage. The same anxiety at the irreversible process of pollution has now come to center on the domestic explosive that we ingest: our daily bread.

Although there does seem to be a reasonable connection between our perception of the poisoned food chain and our worry about what we eat, our newest crisis actually revives a very old pattern in Western life, a pattern in which food and medicine, food and magic have been inextricably mixed. It is an ancient tradition that potions for magic and potions for healing come out of the same caldron. Who does not have in his family some form of a story much cherished in mine? Our version took place at the turn of the century in the Ukraine when my great-aunt, then a child,

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lay ill of smallpox. Her case was so severe that she was expected to die and had been removed to a little hut away from the main house. At this point an old peasant woman came by and peeped in the window. Seeing the plight of the child, she hurried away and returned with a bowl of sour milk, which she fed her spoonful by spoonful. From that moment on, the child began to mend, and, as they say in old German fairy tales, if she hasn't died, she is still alive to this day.

There is much that is suggestive in this story. The old peasant woman, for example: is she not the prototype of the witch, the dangerous guardian of dangerous secrets, controlling health and sickness at her whim? And the sour milk is itself a dish most susceptible to magic, easily curdled by malign influences or evil presences. Yet sour milk was also a staple in the Ukraine, being one of the commonest ways of preserving milk—halfway between a drink and cheese—in a time before refrigeration. Whether the story is asserting the magical power of sour milk as a potion brewed by the knowing old woman or pointing out its inherent goodness as a primal food remains ambiguous, and properly so. The best stories, after all, always leave an echo of uncertainty in the air.

It is hard to remember that the science of nutrition is barely half a century old, so that many of our attitudes were formed, and are still propagated, by people who grew up with the helpless analogies or pragmatic conclusions available to medicine around the turn of the century. The English had learned something about scurvy and citrus fruit, about "fever" and quinine. Digitalis seemed to help certain heart conditions. But why or how these simple medicines worked no one understood.

The combination of our helplessness and our need for certainty, however, led us for decades to rely on principles whose origin we would now blush to acknowledge. I recently heard someone say that she had discovered why she had a certain kind of rash. A friend had pointed out to her the resemblance between her spots and tomato seeds. Her remedy, therefore, was to avoid eating tomatoes. Did she know that she was reasoning by the old medieval doctrine of Signatures?

According to this fascinating science, as expounded by Paracelsus in the sixteenth century, fruits and vegetables carry certain signs that reveal their properties for good or evil. "Behold the *Satyrion* root," he wrote; "is it not formed like the male privy parts? No one can deny this. Accordingly magic discovered it and revealed that it can restore a man's virility and passion. And then we have the thistle; do not its leaves prickle like needles? Thanks to this sign, the art of magic discovered that there is no better herb against internal prickling." Jerusalem artichokes that grew as stumpy, deformed-looking roots were thought, as late as the nineteenth century, to induce leprosy, because, as Paracelsus would say, were they not like the misshapen fingers of the late stages of leprosy? Similarly, the beloved port wine tonic so gravely prescribed by physicians to improve the blood of pale Victorian young ladies had no more relation to blood than artichokes had to leprosy. But the principle of analogy is persuasive and not easily shakable.

In the fields of food and drink we are still most vulnerable to the claims of superstition. The pseudo-scientific reasoning that introduces so many food fads comes dressed in the impressive language of medicine, and instantly quenches every spark of skepticism still feebly alive within us by satisfying our conscious need for "scientific" proof while feeding our simple credulity. Although we learned long ago to abandon magical thinking in connection with weather, crops, the care of animals, and other natural phenomena, it still has us in its grip when we think of diet. Our latest thinking about food, based on fear, is proportionately retrograde—willing to accept, indeed seeking out, the consolations of magic, the mute practice of peasants, and the quaint devices of folklore. Books on the saving properties of "honegar" (a mixture of honey and vinegar), of blackstrap molasses, of sprouting mung beans, succeed one another in unending succession. The *Foxfire* book of homely know-how has gone into a third volume in response to popular interest, just as the earlier *Whole Earth Catalogue* was the guide for all seekers of the true way. The dividing line between recipes for natural foods and other natural remedies, for illness, for making a garden, for

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building a house, has grown steadily fainter. The Department of Agriculture pamphlets that were once sought after for the best scientific solutions to problems in domestic economy are being supplanted in popularity by books reviving traditional methods of cultivation and cures, the more ancient and more bizarre the better. "Chicken shit," I heard one cosmopolite in New Hampshire say, "isn't that what you're supposed to put on cuts?"

With our sophisticated imaginations we endow all these stratagems with the patina of ancient wisdom, of lost truths, and we flee from the modern world, condemning packaged white bread with a passion we reserve for few other evils. We hardly notice, in this flight from reason, the disappearance of smallpox, or that we no longer expect a "cholera season," or that the eight million people who live in the squalor called New York are drinking safe water.

The unexamined residue of literal magic—the heritage of the Signature, or vaguer memories of aphrodisiacs—is augmented by the history of manners and social usage that has created a mystical hierarchy of foods, each with its own special and instantly identifiable attributes. It was in recognition of the power of this symbolism that the West German government recently barred a cigarette company from continuing a false advertisement. What was striking about it was that, although wordless, the meaning of the ad was unmistakable: in the foreground lay a package of cigarettes, in the background a loaf of crusty bread, an earthenware milk jug, and a picturesque cluster of wheat stalks, all bathed in a golden light. In any part of the Western world, the message was instantly decipherable: whatever is natural, elemental, is therefore wholesome. What could be purer and more innocent in our imaginations than bread and milk? With bread such a universal symbol, it is no wonder that so much feeling is again centering on it.

Much of the history of Europe could be written using the fine wheaten loaf as a barometer. For a long time, sumptuary laws forbade it to all but members of noble households. Like the Cadillac to the slum dweller today, it came to stand for all kinds of things that had nothing to do with its function. The peasant's black bread may have been ultimately more nutritious, but to him it was the sign of poverty and servitude, as white bread was the sign of wealth and freedom. The oldest prejudice of mankind has probably been in favor of wheat to the denigration of all other grains. While bread was not the first food of man, it has been a staple since Neolithic times, and has been the main, and sometimes the only, food for all but the tiny percentage of the privileged. What is visible from the earliest times is that all grains are not equal, and even in Egyptian wall paintings the priests are offering the gods beautiful cone-shaped loaves made of wheat flour, while the fellahin are eating millet.

We can endorse the prejudices of our ancestors, of course, by agreeing that fine wheaten bread is obviously "better" than bread made of rye or oats or millet or spelt or chestnuts. But the objective merits of wheat bread—its lightness, delicate flavor, rich texture—are all less significant to the imagination than its having been for so long an unattainable luxury. In England even the symbolic status of the brown-bread bakers was inferior to that of white-bread bakers. The arms granted to them in 1622, a quarter of a century after the white-bread bakers, are similar in most details, but are instantly perceptible as lesser by the lack of supporting festoons and a motto. During the nineteenth century, the brown-bread bakers began to find allies in various groups that had discovered the evils of white bread. "A Physician" in 1846 pointed out that the nourishing "ingredients are removed by the miller in his efforts to please the public so that fine flour, instead of being better than meal is the least nourishing. . . . It seems desirable that the poor be brought to inquire whether they do not purchase at too dear a rate the privilege of indulging in the use of it." All this was written under the old, relatively primitive conditions when grain was still stone-ground.

When the new roller mills were introduced in the 1870s, making the production of white flour cheaper and less nutritious than ever, one of the big brown-bread baking companies in London attempted to defend its product by inviting a "distinguished gathering of physicians, medical officers and representatives of the press" to view a newly installed set of

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steam ovens. At the luncheon that followed, the vice-chairman of the firm laid at the door of white bread "the sickly, stunted and rickety children which infest the courts and alleys of all large towns where the poor congregate." Indeed, the chemicals used to produce the much-longed-for "nice white loaf," he concluded, produced in actuality nothing more than "whited sepulchers."

But neither the revelations of the brown-bread bakers nor the reasoning of the Bread Reform League had any effect. "Why," one of its members asked in 1888, "in our craze for white bread, should we raise so many feeble, nervous, undersized children upon an impoverished flour, because it looks white and light . . . ? White bread alone will not sustain life. Dogs fed on white bread died at the end of forty days, whilst those fed on wheat bread alone throve and flourished." Quite deaf to these pleas, the English working-class poor knew what they wanted and, as soon as they could, bought their white, wheaten loaf—although by the time they could afford it, they were getting the proverbial stone for bread. The fine white loaf, and the tea with canned, skimmed milk that became the basis of the working-class English diet, was nutritionally so valueless that, as George Orwell once said, it did no more than cheat hunger three times a day. Ironically enough, by the nineteenth century, when wheat was produced in sufficient quantity to supply the demand of all those who wanted it, bread consumption had begun to fall everywhere.

The powerful associations with rank that have survived underground will not be denied, and continue to endow ordinary items of food and drink with attributes more significant than their chemical composition. Montaigne's explanation is as succinct as it is enduring. "For to decree that none but princes shall eat turbot," he wrote, "and be allowed to wear velvet or gold lace, and forbid these things to the people, what is it but to bring them into a greater esteem, and increase the desire of everyone to enjoy them?" Under such circumstances, what is one century of availability against the yearnings of millennia? Even today, when white bread is commonplace, only bread or rolls of white wheat flour will be served at a festive meal. Solzhenitsyn—who writes, after all, about men in extreme circumstances—describes vividly in the *Gulag Archipelago* how the idea of white bread could be used to torment a prisoner at crucial moments: "the starvation technique," he wrote, "like interrogation at night was an integral element in the entire system of coercion. Chulpenyev was kept for a month on three and a half ounces of bread, after which—when he had just been brought from the pit—the interrogator Sokol placed in front of him a pot of thick borscht, and half a loaf of white bread sliced diagonally. [What does it matter one might ask, how it was sliced? But Chulpenyev even today would insist that it was really sliced very attractively.]"

In our search now for whole wheat bread and coarse pumpernickel, we have turned one of the oldest ideals of Europe upside down. One historian of diet, Günther Wiegelmann, has pointed out that when new technology and changes in fashion make traditional ingredients scarce, they are suddenly revived as delicacies by the middle classes. Honey, for example, for centuries man's only sweetener, came back as a delicacy in the nineteenth century after sugar had long since driven it out. Buckwheat groats, bean soups, and now dark bread are restored out of the same impulses that brought back Morris dancing in England and societies for the preservation of local costume in Germany. Perhaps we should read some of the labels on the brown paper sacks. One of the biggest distributors of whole wheat flour notes (in small print, to be sure) that it has added malted barley. Someone there knows that customers will accept the newly desired brown loaf more readily if it is made tastier by the addition of malt. Despite our new aims, we are still buying the package rather than the contents, as we have for so long been in the habit of doing.

In America, unlike Europe, bread has been less than central to our diet, which makes the passionate search for the home-baked loaf all the more remarkable. It is one phenomenon that cannot be laid at the door of the wave of nostalgia that seems to be overtaking every other area of life. Requiring both time and real effort, baking appears as an active attempt to build up something original. Bread bakers are not looking for shortcuts and scorn the easy-no-knead breads. The whole point of

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the exercise is to go back as far in the bread-making chain as possible. Some serious bakers even buy their wheat in the grain and grind it at home. Sourdough starters and homemade yeasts are commonplace. In an epoch that has been devoted to the development of convenience foods, this change must be seen as an attempt to regain control of what is eaten by manufacturing it at home.

In other areas as well, the primitive is reasserting itself. No one will be surprised to learn that seventy million Americans are overweight, and most of them at one time or another are on a diet. Some are impelled by vanity, but many are dieting for their lives, fearing fats, salt, sugar, carbohydrates, all those villains that bring on heart attacks and untimely death. Here mythology again offers sweet reassurances: in the Bulgarian peasants who live forever on yogurt, in the remote Mongol tribe that reaches a shapely and vigorous old age on a diet of cornmeal and cheese. In short, the ancient urban yearning for a largely imaginary pastoral, an idea already old when put into verse by Vergil, has reasserted itself in the headlong flight from refinement to soups, stews, and breads—the coarser, the better.

There was a time when it was rather a compliment to one's guests to serve them Beef Wellington. By now it is regarded as little better than putting a gun to their heads. Cheese had better be dry, chalky, and preferably of goats' milk. A creamy brie only shows a total lack of sensitivity. At dessert, the dense chocolate nut torte is no more than a memory, replaced everywhere by chaste and artistic arrangements of small fruits. One item, however, survives. As the German cigarette advertiser knew so well, at the heart of it all, white or brown, must be a crusty loaf of bread.

I worry now about a certain seepage. A recent visit to a drugstore revealed several companies pushing oatmeal soap. And Clairol, which until now brought us sparkling blondes enjoying champagne parties, has taken up a new ideal, printed in sepia ink. We are now confronted with a milkmaid churning butter in a well-mannered pastoral landscape. According to the Victorian Gothic script, she is there to call attention to a "BUTTERMILK shampoo with ten 100 percent chemically organic ingredients." I copied it all down in my notebook, and decided to go home and study it as yet another tributary to the rising brown tide.

Our new all-inclusive fear has led to a new all-purpose remedy. Whatever is natural, or colored brown, is good for you. At least, it is presumed harmless. Just as the fear has spilled over from food to cosmetics to the universe, the remedies, too, follow hard behind, echoing antiphonally the new danger, with new counsel for evasive action.

With our lives at stake, we find ourselves caught between two conflicting ideals. On the one hand, we still cherish the debonair worldling ordering his oysters (without regard to sewage), his filet mignon (without regard to the world grain supply), his grapes (without regard to César Chavez). His alter ego is the social hero: self-abnegating, placing public policy above private pleasure, and rigorously rational. Without sorrow or regret, he eliminates—as decreed by the FDA, the surgeon general, or the Third World—tobacco, cyclamates, red dye no. 2, butter, cream, and marbled beef.

Yet running through all this reasoned, politic behavior is a strange element of the irrational, in which we seek to ward off evil by talismans. As fresh dangers threaten us with every new edition of the newspaper, we renounce our butter, cream, and marbled beef as sacrifices to the gods, hoping to propitiate them with our good intentions. In our anxiety we have converted our lives into a daily morality play, assigning every morsel, every act its part in the grand drama. As time goes on, our worldly self, he who stood for a way of life based on a knowledge of pleasure, a love of ornamentation, an acceptance of self-indulgence, appears less and less frequently. When he does, he is an embarrassment, about as welcome as the stone guest at Don Giovanni's last supper party. None of us, it would seem, wants to be caught at the table.

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PORTRAIT

One Woman's Career: Liberation Through Limitation

ROBERT K. WALLACE

It goes against the American grain to suggest that freedom is anything less than an absolute good. Young women are now growing up to think that they must be totally "liberated"—that the only way they can find themselves is to avoid any dependence on others or hindrance to the full blossoming of the inviolate self. Hordes of American women have joined the parade of American men who have marched to the drumbeat of early Emerson: the belief that self-reliance can be taken literally as an absolute good. And some women, certainly, have had good reason. So strong is their genuine sense of past oppression that many of them react as Ahab did to the whale that "dismasted" him. Any suggestion that the whale may not be malevolent, that the universe is anything other than a conspiracy to deprive one of one's rights, is met with scorn. So women's liberation, like so many American movements, at times lacks, as did Ahab, a sense of paradox, the sense that freedoms gained may also be freedoms lost.

Rosina Lhevinne, now ninety-six years old, appears to have achieved what any self-respecting "modern" American woman should strive for—a successful career. During her twenty-five years at Juilliard she has been perhaps the most sought-after piano teacher in the world. If piano teachers, like baseball players, had a hall of fame, she would probably rank number one. Not only as a teacher but as a pianist she has had an enviable solo career. It began at the age of seventy-six, when she played high in the Rockies at Aspen, Colorado. That was in 1956. Two years later, her pupil, Van Cliburn, won the Tchaikovsky competition in Moscow and she got public recognition for what musicians had known for years—that Rosina Lhevinne was one of the world's masters at teaching people to play the piano. In 1962 came her grand debut with the New York Philharmonic, playing Chopin's E Minor Concerto under Leonard Bernstein. She retired from the concert stage two years later.

Despite her hard-won success and her youthful vitality, Rosina Lhevinne has remained a traditional, if not old-fashioned, woman. She regards as the highlight of her life, not the late-blooming success of her own career, but the forty-six years during which she was married to the great virtuoso Josef Lhevinne and subordinated her own professional development to his. From their marriage in 1898 to his death in 1944, she devoted herself to furthering his solo aspirations; even her trips to the concert stage were limited to periodic conjugal visits. She and Josef did give two-piano performances throughout his career, however. The first was in Moscow in 1899 at the request of composer César Cui; the last was in New York's Town Hall in 1944. In between, they played in Saint Petersburg and Paris and Vienna and Berlin and scores of American cities, major and minor. Rosina Lhevinne was repeatedly requested by leading newspaper music critics and by close friends to give solo recitals of her own, but she repeatedly refused. At their two-piano concerts, Josef always played a

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number of solo works, but she never did.

In teaching, it was much the same. He, with the reputation of a world-famous virtuoso, had many students but also many concert engagements that often took him away from his home and studio. In his absence, she filled in for him, eventually giving his students a goodly number of their lessons. Some of those who studied with them both maintain that Rosina was the superior teacher (although most of them simply say that the Lhevinnes, despite their different approaches, were effective in their own way). Yet when one of their students did well, Josef got most of the recognition. And for equal work Rosina seldom got equal pay. At Juilliard and privately, her husband's fee was always higher than hers.

From today's vantage point, many women might say that Rosina Lhevinne, during her marriage, violated her own talent and individuality by working to develop someone else's. Such a theory would have made no sense to her then, nor does it now, with hindsight. For her, ambition and a wish to excel were tempered by her love for a man. When she was eighteen years old, she decided to put being a wife before being a professional woman. Thanks to her longevity, she has achieved success in both roles. Because when young she actually did have a choice between a career and marriage, her experience sheds oblique but interesting light on a question tormenting many women today: What is it to be free?

At eighteen, Rosina Bessie was the youngest girl ever to have been graduated from the Moscow Conservatory with a gold medal. She had played the piano since she was six and her mother was thought by friends to have lived for Rosina's having the career she herself had been unable to have. Maria Bessie's sensitivity on this point was revealed on her daughter's tenth or eleventh birthday. When Rosina's parents gave her a small writing desk for a present, a close friend of the family said to her mother, "It's pretty early to give her a place where she can count all the money she will make from her concert career." Maria Bessie severed the friendship.

When Rosina Bessie and Josef Lhevinne married, one week after her graduation, many of their friends expected that she would pursue a career and that competition between husband and wife would be strong. "They bet on us," she recalls, "as on horses, that the marriage would last a year at the most." Josef, five years older than his young wife, had won his gold medal six years before her, in 1892, along with his classmates Scriabin and Rachmaninoff. Before that, when only fifteen, he had played Beethoven's *Emperor* Concerto in Moscow under the great Anton Rubinstein. At twenty, he had won the Second International Rubinstein Prize Competition in Berlin. But the required year of military service had forced him to cancel the engagements resulting from the competition, and at the time of the marriage he was slowly trying to work his way back into the spotlight. Rosina, fresh from the conservatory, might well have carved out a place for herself. We will never know. Believing that Josef was much the superior pianist, she sensed intuitively that for the sake of the marriage she should forgo her own career, and she did just that.

For an eighteen-year-old Russian girl in 1898, the thought of being, say, a doctor or a lawyer would have seemed farfetched. But for aspiring pianists there were splendid female models. Rosina Bessie, before her marriage, had heard the two greatest: Teresa Carreño and Annette Essipova. Carreño, a magnificent, powerful Venezuelan, played the Tchaikovsky Concerto with the force of a man, and decorated her ample breast with medals from throughout the world. By the time of Rosina's marriage, Carreño had divorced the most famous of her husbands—Eugène d'Albert, the celebrated Beethoven interpreter. Their tempestuous marriage had done nothing to hurt their separate careers, nor did its dissolution detract from the public popularity of either.

Rosina Bessie, much as she admired Carreño, could not have patterned a musical career after hers. Unlike the Venezuelan, Rosina was petite and had small hands. In stature and in temperament, she more closely resembled Annette Essipova, who had married the famous teacher Theodor Leschetizky after studying with him at the Saint Petersburg Conservatory. Instead of the physical force of Carreño, Essipova possessed great delicacy and nuance. Rosina Bessie had

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heard her play Schumann and Chopin and had been impressed by her sensitive pedaling and phrasing. Here was a pianistic model she might certainly have followed. And there was no reason to think that marriage to Josef Lhevinne would hinder her career. Essipova's marriage to Leschetizky had helped establish her name as a soloist. And the failure of that marriage had no more harmed her career than had the failure of Carreño's.

Rosina Bessie, then, had the talent, the ambition, and the precedent to develop a solo career. Yet she balked. Perhaps it was precisely the example of Carreño and Essipova that worried her. At any rate, she somehow felt that to follow the career would be to lose the marriage, and she felt the marriage was more important. Was she correct? It is a question perhaps no man or woman can answer for another. She feels she was.

How great a career might Rosina have had? As a student she played with considerable facility. Gold medals were not awarded promiscuously at the Moscow Conservatory, and a student who won one was considered capable of playing professionally. Whether Rosina Lhevinne would have developed the emotional depth and projecting power that distinguish the world's great pianists is impossible to say. Her solo performances when she was between seventy-six and eighty-four years old, with their technical finesse and warmth of phrasing, and her on-stage presence, suggested to many observers that she would. If she could play like that after limiting herself to two-piano pieces most of her adult life, how might she have developed if she had devoted the whole of her life to performing the best solo repertoire?

One can evaluate her potential in 1898 and her solo achievement in 1962. But how interpolate the artistic growth and experience that might have taken place in the intervening decades? It is surely possible that Rosina Lhevinne, had she chosen, might have become another Annette Essipova, or Olga Samaroff, or Myra Hess, or Clara Haskil. But then she might not have. Could anyone who heard Clara Haskil, the young Romanian pianist, in the 1920s have predicted the artist who was to emerge thirty years later? Could anyone who heard Artur Rubinstein in his youth and middle age have predicted the growth in warmth and depth he has achieved in advanced age? As for Rosina Lhevinne, who is to say how much sooner (or later) she would have been recognized as a world-famous piano teacher had she not taught so long in the shadow (or glory) of her husband?

To her, such questions are pointless speculation—not because she was not interested in her own career, but because she was more interested in another's. Much more significant and fruitful today are two questions of a different sort: What kind of woman would reject the lure of a career for the role of a wife? What meaning, if any, does Rosina Lhevinne's experience hold out to talented women facing the same choice today, eighty years after she faced it?

As mentioned before, Rosina Lhevinne is, in spite of her age and achievement, in some ways old-fashioned. Josef Lhevinne—her idol, then her husband, then her late husband—was the one adored man in her long life. She fell in love with him when she was nine years old and he, a youth of fourteen, came to substitute for her piano teacher, who was ill. When she was ten, she heard him play with Anton Rubinstein in the Great Hall of the Nobility, Moscow's most imposing concert hall. From that time on, she revered him to the degree that she never seriously considered another man—and perhaps to the degree that she underestimated her own talent. While they were engaged but not yet married, the two of them would occasionally play at *soirées*. Once, after one of these performances, a socially prominent woman came up to Rosina and said, "You know, I liked your playing much better than Josef's." Rosina was shocked—and disappointed. Later, shortly before her graduation, she was playing a Chopin nocturne at a master class of Vassily Safonoff, who taught both her and Josef at the Moscow Conservatory. Josef had come to listen. After she finished, Safonoff asked Josef to play the same nocturne. When he was done, Safonoff said to her, "If you played the beginning and the end, and Josef the middle, it would be a perfect nocturne." Again, rather than flattered, she was hurt. Josef was her musical idol; to be put on equal terms with him was unthinkable, even when it was done by Safonoff, a musician she

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greatly admired. But, paradoxically, while her youthful and lifelong admiration for Josef Lhevinne and his talent may have caused her to underestimate herself and her own talent, that same admiration seems to have helped a pampered child overcome strong tendencies toward grasping ambition and complacent self-esteem. An episode from the Lhevinnes' honeymoon suggests how this happened.

The wedding ceremony was followed by a supper at L'Hermitage, a Moscow restaurant that had been a favorite of Tchaikovsky. The newlyweds then boarded a train for Pushkino, a suburb of Moscow, where Rosina's mother had furnished a cottage for them. After they had been there several weeks, they visited the Bessies for a Sunday dinner. On the way back, riding in the open carriage of a droshky on a humid summer night, Josef looked up at the sky and said, "Look, Rosina, there are millions of mosquitoes!" She looked, and saw the sky was full. Then he said, "You know, we are one of them." This remark she regards as the turning point of her life. As a child, the entire household had revolved around her, and until this moment she had assumed that the rest of the world did as well. To hear her husband, the man she so admired, say that she and he were nothing, that she was one of those mosquitoes, was more than she was prepared for. At first she felt only pain and humiliation. But the episode seems to have been the first step by which she finally came to realize that she, though in some ways a special person, shared the same limited fate of all living creatures. That balance was not reached soon, nor was it steady; her moods tended to move from extreme highs to extreme lows. But her husband's calmer nature, and her trust in his judgment and talent, helped her to curb her excessive ambition and self-esteem and to broaden her perspective. Interestingly enough, she for him did quite the reverse: she gave focus to his wide perspective and instilled drive and direction into his somewhat lethargic nature.

Once she had given up her own solo aspirations to further her husband's artistic development, Rosina Lhevinne channeled much of her energy into activating his career. What she did not do herself she would do through him. After three years of marriage the Lhevinnes found themselves living comfortably in Tiflis (now Tbilisi), where Josef had a teaching position in the conservatory. He, who loved fishing and stargazing and the mountains, was content with teaching, and giving occasional concerts. But she would not let him rest content. She insisted that they move to Berlin, then the musical capital of the world. There, after a year's hard work, he joined Hofmann, Busoni, Godowsky, and Rosenthal in "the family of pianistic giants" (in the words of a Warsaw critic). Thus did Lhevinne, remarkably gifted but languid and unambitious, respond to the prodding of his energetic wife. He spent his whole life on the leading concert platforms of the world, instead of fishing and stargazing in the Caucasus.

Those fortunate to have heard Josef Lhevinne in person must surely be thankful for Rosina's persistence. So are those of my generation who are too young to have seen him but have heard his extraordinary playing of Chopin on the disks recorded for RCA. Rosina Lhevinne, had she developed a solo career of her own, would most likely have become a Chopin interpreter also; but it is unlikely that she, or anyone else, would ever have been able to match the transcendental glory of her husband's interpretation of the Étude in Double Thirds. While one is thankful that Lhevinne did record this and other short works, one can only regret that he never recorded such other specialties of his as the Tchaikovsky Concerto or the Brahms-Paganini Variations. But that he did play as much and as well as he did, and as long as he did, is something for which his wife deserves considerable credit.

Furthering and sharing her husband's career was not Rosina Lhevinne's only womanly goal. She had always told Josef that "when we have children they will come first and not you." Two children did come, and she devoted much of her mental and emotional energy to rearing them. True, she did not have to wash diapers and cook, or spend hours doing dishes. For that work she had two loyal servants—Masha Alexieff, who was with the family from 1902 in Moscow until her death in California in the early 1960s, and Sarah Crump, who joined the Lhevinnes in New York in the early 1920s and stayed with

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them fifty years until her death in the early 1970s. With Sarah and Masha in the household, Rosina Lhevinne had time to assist her husband in teaching and to play occasional two-piano concerts with him. But if parenthood was not costly for her in terms of household drudgery, she paid a price in terms of emotional strain—being the mother of the children of a celebrity is never easy. Looking back on her role as encourager and sustainer of her husband's career, where success can so easily be measured, she clearly feels proud of what she has done, and feels that doing it was worth giving up the chance for her own career. Looking back on her role as a parent, where success can never be measured so easily, she also feels that the human satisfactions she gained overshadow any possible professional loss.

In evaluating Rosina Lhevinne's choice of husband and children over a future solo career, one must give due weight to her own feeling that she was right. Yet two reservations might be raised. First, psychologists tell us that we are often satisfied with what we have done because we have a strong need to be satisfied. And, second, it could be argued that Rosina Lhevinne may easily be pleased with the decision she made when she was eighteen—now that she has lived well enough and long enough to have had it, as a woman, both ways.

Certainly the path she has chosen has not been entirely suffused with sweetness and light. A price has been exacted—from her and those around her. To live largely through her husband's career, to play largely through his fingers, has from her viewpoint been a noble goal and, to a large degree, a noble achievement. But it has also caused her moments of conscious—perhaps years of unconscious—frustration. Even Josef, the apparent beneficiary of her sacrifice, may have paid a price: more often than he might have wished, he had to validate his wife's renunciation of the concert stage. Judging from the art that resulted, we and she and he may be thankful that he did, But there was a price.

Rosina Lhevinne's career as a wife leaves us with a paradox. To gain what she now has, she lost a solo career of unknown dimensions. But had she gained that career, she would most probably have lost what she has and what she is. She has achieved what might be called liberation through limitation. That liberation has carried psychological costs as well as benefits, but so does the kind sought by contemporary feminists who choose the road of complete self-reliance. Rosina Lhevinne's career as a pianist and a teacher—as well as a wife—has consistently embraced a paradox central to most religions but heretical to many Americans in their secular lives. The paradox is this: to find one's life one must lose it.

As teachers of piano, both Josef and Rosina Lhevinne were exemplars of the Russian school and followers of Anton Rubinstein. They steadily stressed that one must acquire a complete technical mastery of the instrument before achieving effective interpretation; that the freedom to interpret a work truthfully is earned through disciplined acquisition of technique. George Eliot expressed this memorably in *Daniel Deronda,* when Klesmer, the musician (modeled on Anton Rubinstein) declares that "genius at first is little more than a great capacity for receiving discipline." When Rosina Lhevinne gave the convocation address at Juilliard in 1949, she stressed the same idea of freedom through discipline in her title: "Tempo Rubato: Give and Take in Music and in Life." For her, the great beauty of rubato as a musical concept is that what you take from one note you give to another. Without such discipline, freedom could degenerate into meaningless idiosyncrasy.

On the concert stage, as in teaching, Rosina Lhevinne has consistently demonstrated the connection between discipline and freedom, give and take. Since she and her husband differed greatly in temperament, pianistically and personally, their two-piano performances seldom followed the old cliché, "They make two pianos speak as one." Rather, within the definite limits set by the score and the other performer, they made two pianos speak as two. In two-piano performances, as in marriage, dual individuality is difficult but possible.

In her later piano career, too, Rosina Lhevinne had a flair for expressing her individuality in ensemble. For a decade, beginning in 1951, she played about once a year with the Juilliard Quartet. In 1953 they played Dvoř-

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ák's "Dumka" Quintet for the first time. A reviewer wrote of the pianist, "It was a sheer delight to hear the piano played with such sparkle, such a wide range of expressive nuance, and such unostentatious conformity to the demands of the ensemble." Balance between individual and ensemble was likewise a strong feature of the piano concertos Rosina Lhevinne chose to play most often (and to record) between the ages of seventy-six and eighty-four: Mozart's C Major, K. 467, and Chopin's E Minor, op. 11. In neither concerto does the solo voice thunder and posture and sweep the poor orchestra off the horizon—as a Tchaikovsky or Rachmaninoff or Prokofiev solo part sometimes does. But the solo voice is no less individual for the fact that it blends so harmoniously, so unostentatiously, so memorably with the sonorities, rhythms, and phrases shared with the tutti. Francis Perkins, reviewing one of Mme Lhevinne's performances of the Chopin, found its significance to be in "its realization of the essential atmosphere of the music, which is something quite a few younger pianists find to be elusive. It was an understanding of an intimate and persuasive kind, which in its pace and phrasing gave a sense of personality, but not of placing personality in the foreground."

The kind of individuality Rosina Lhevinne has chosen in music and in life is the kind Elizabeth Bennet and Isabel Archer excelled at—individuality resulting from free choice within a larger context, and freedom limited by the conditions of that choice. It is an individuality not reserved for women only; nor does the emphasis here on liberation through limitation suggest that all who search for pure, unlimited liberation are necessarily misguided. Pure self-reliance, for man or woman, can be exhilarating, but so can growth through limitation and renunciation. Contrary to current conventional wisdom, the amazing thing is not that Rosina Lhevinne at an early age renounced the development of her solo career ("so many women are thus suppressed"), but that after nearly fifty years of marriage she had, and has, so much talent and vitality and individuality left.

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Literary Biography

JAMES ATLAS

No biographer who reads Henry James's tale *The Aspern Papers* can ever feel quite the same about the moral nature of biography. That bizarre, uncanny fable, designed to fill prospective biographers with shame, remains a parable of the desire to become omniscient which is an affliction of their trade. James's unnamed narrator, having moved into the desolate Venetian *palazzo* of an elderly woman who had once been the lover of a famous poet, will stop at nothing to obtain the papers in her possession; and when she surprises him in the act of opening a desk where he supposes them to be hidden, and denounces him as a "publishing scoundrel," all biographers must feel themselves accused.

Nor is this the only uneasiness biographers have to suffer. Their craft has never been securely established as a literary genre—except in rare instances, most notably Boswell's *Life of Johnson* or Lytton Strachey's *Eminent Victorians*. So uncertain is the state of biography that several of its most distinguished practitioners have lately felt called upon to publish theoretical discussions of their work; and those who haven't can usually be found commenting on their difficulties within the text of their biographies. If there is a common theme to Leon Edel's *Literary Biography*, Richard Ellmann's *Golden Codgers*, and A. O. J. Cockshut's *Truth to Life: The Art of Biography in the Nineteenth Century*, it is that biographers possess a peculiar relationship to literature, one that requires them to vindicate themselves not only before the tribunal of the living, but before their vanished subjects, whose recriminations are no less effective for being mute. It is not an easy thing to have to confront the strictures of the dead against their eventual biographers, and the sense of trespass can only be exorcised by rigorous justifications—which is why so many biographers have taken it into their own hands to establish a legitimate place for biography within the field of letters.

Leon Edel, in the writing of his five-volume biography of Henry James, had to contend with his subject's often-stated hostility to biographers as well as with the fact that James consigned to a roaring fireplace the correspondence of some forty years. Perhaps it was this experience that provoked Edel to an eloquent defense of his practice, for which he claims (justifiably, to my mind) a great deal. The biographer, in Edel's view, must be psychologist and artist, historian and critic, a craftsman obligated to "appraise the life of another by becoming that other person; and he must be scrupulously careful that in the process the other person is not refashioned in his own image." Given the complexity of any life, the hidden vicissitudes and emotional crises that often have a more profound influence on character than those dramatic episodes available to the biographer, Edel insists that biography "is the costliest of all labors on this earth."

Nor has this labor been made any simpler by modern methods of research: ever since Freud, the biographer has taken on the responsibility of having to comprehend the very motives of his subject. Richard Ellmann, more circumspect and apologetic than Edel, has cautioned against the excessive reliance on psychoanalysis to be found in much contemporary biography, and yet concludes his introduction to *Golden Codgers* with the suggestion that future biographers may draw

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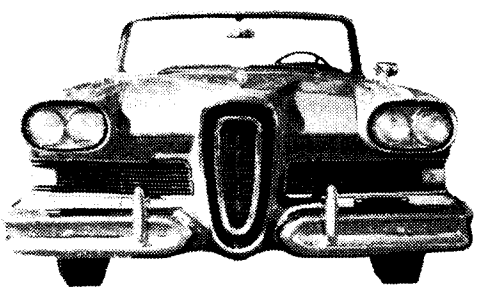

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closer still to "knowing another person who has lived as well as we know a character in fiction, and better than we know ourselves." In this remark, as in Edel's quoted above, we can discern a manifestation of our self-conscious, introspective age: the appearance of the biographer within the design of his own production. Formerly behind the scenes, he shows himself briefly to his audience before retreating backstage into the voice of objective narration.

The result is a new predicament, one to which Edel in particular has drawn attention. Like Freud, who complained that "biographers are fixated on their heroes," tending to devote themselves "to a task of idealization, aimed at enrolling the great man among the class of their infantile models," Edel emphasizes the biographer's inevitable obsession with his subject. The relationship between them is "ghostly," for the biographer is called upon to experience and resurrect a past life not his own. Surely one of the most burdensome legacies of Freud has been this tireless identification of motive in all human relationships, an idea naturally significant for the craft of biography. No longer can the biographer hope to subside into his subject; rather, he stands interposed, in a version of relativity, between his subject and the reality of his subject's life, which appears before us refracted through the lens of the biographer's own temperament. Aware of the manner in which he "identifies" (to use the modern word) with his subject—his own image lurking in the mirror held up to that elusive other—he must struggle more than ever to become inconspicuous. This deliberate self-effacement exceeds in some respects the tact that was a feature of nineteenth-century biography, which, for all its modesty and judicious concealment of facts, often yielded more about a biographer than would appear from his pose of impersonality. In his book on Victorian biography, A. O. J. Cockshut has brilliantly shown how such apparently reticent biographers as J. A. Froude and Wilfrid Ward imposed their views through concealment and innuendo. Froude had been a disciple of Carlyle, whose life he wrote, while Ward's father had been a personal friend of his subject, Cardinal Newman; and in the close quarters, the hierarchical world of England's intellectual class in the nineteenth century, such associations were all but inevitable. Cockshut stresses that "mid-Victorian biographers believed above all in documentary evidence . . . in the supremacy of original sources over secondary comment." And yet, as he himself demonstrates with great ingenuity, behind the veil of reticence was to be found a whole climate of polemical involvement in their subjects' careers, if not in the intimate details of their lives.

By the turn of the century, a biographer like Leslie Stephen could be genuinely convinced that "the full blaze of modern biography has left not even the minutest detail untouched." His own biographical sketches of Arnold, Wordsworth, or Tennyson are no more revelatory than those of his predecessors, but a new theme does emerge. Discussing Boswell, Stephen praises the strategies he used to capture the *experience* of Johnson (a word made crucial during that era through Pater's use of it), calling Boswell's *Life* "not merely an account of Johnson, but what we should call a study of human life." This remark, in itself a rather modest generality, nevertheless indicated a departure from the labored historical volumes, really biographies of ideas, that had been characteristic until then. Nor would it be long before Stephen's renewed interest in the hidden, inward life known even to great public men found an exponent in that intuitive chronicler of sensibility, Lytton Strachey.

Strachey's books have not survived undamaged by time, and I suspect that if it weren't for Michael Holroyd's popular biography of him and, in general, the current fascination with Bloomsbury, they would no longer be much read. The particular point of view which Strachey brought to biography—that a man's interior life, no less than his actions, illuminates his character—had been employed in the otherwise classically Victorian autobiographies of Newman and Mill; but it is with Strachey that biography appropriates "the whole range of human experience." These last words are Holroyd's, from a brief essay on biography that appeared in *Harper's Bookletter* (November 11, 1974). His claims for his subject's achievement are understandably large but by no means unjustified, for it was Strachey's virtue to have greatly enlivened

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biography by choosing subjects who could only have been considered representative if one believed that any human being could be made to reveal "the manifold existences of men."

The implications for this sort of anti-heroic biography were noted by Virginia Woolf. "Is not anyone," she wondered, "who has lived a life, and left a record of that life, worthy of biography?" Of course, some of Strachey's subjects had been more eminent than others; but he examined them all in the light of their smallest gestures, thinking them characteristic, as well as in those accomplishments for which they would have been remembered in any case. Dr. Arnold (Matthew's father) crawling on all fours among his children, the imperious and merciless vanities of General Gordon—these, conjoined with their activities on the visible plane of history, were to provide the elements for a genuine portrait of a personality.

Biography was crucial to the Bloomsbury group, no doubt because their interest in themselves amounted to an obsession. Virginia Woolf emphasized that for the Edwardians "life consists in personality," and so it was no accident (as the Marxists say) that biography should have made such advances among their circle. We have not only the example of Strachey, but of Virginia Woolf herself, in her biography of Roger Fry and in *Orlando*. That novel—subtitled "A Biography," graced with photographs of Vita Sackville-West (once her lover, as Quentin Bell suggested in his biography of Virginia Woolf and Nigel Nicolson has lately verified in *Portrait of a Marriage*)—is at once a satire on biography and a vindication of its possibilities. The story of this androgynous character, a poet, ambassador, and adventurer whose life spans three and a half centuries, can be seen as a fictional precursor to contemporary biography in its reliance on the techniques of fiction. The most accomplished biographers of our time have not hesitated to reconstruct the temper of thought from within, a device invented by the very novelists who have been their subjects: Proust, Joyce, and Henry James. One could even conjecture that a fortuitous conjunction of temperaments occurred in the making of their biographies. Is it fanciful to propose that the novelists' modes of writing influenced their biographers in how they chose to represent them?

It would be unfair to generalize too much about three such different biographies as George Painter's *Proust,* Leon Edel's *Henry James,* and Richard Ellmann's *James Joyce.* But what these three biographies do share is the peculiarly modern deification of personality, and a conviction that the key to their subjects' lives is to be found in their imaginative work. In fiction another parallel to their methods would be Mann's *Doctor Faustus,* ostensibly the biography of a composer. Here the narrator is necessarily more in evidence than in a genuine biography, the episodes he relates more charged with symbolic value by virtue of their being sheer invention. What is the same is the attempt to render consciousness as an event no less important than those external incidents that formerly made up the substance of biography. The contemporary biographer has drawn closer than ever to his subject, to the point of appropriating the tools in his workshop in order to fashion from them a more proximate likeness.

II

The new concern with registering states of consciousness that appeared in the novel with Joyce and Proust could only have had one result: the emergence of autobiography as the novelist's point of departure. What better subject could have presented itself to an author inquiring into the mind's elaborate mechanisms than his own experience? Proust's and Joyce's works were largely autobiographical (as were Henry James's, if one accepts the major premise of Edel's biography)—so much so in the case of Proust that it served as his biographer's main exhibit. Once the notion of writing directly from one's experience had become axiomatic, the old question of whether life imitated art or the reverse was superfluous; they were identical.

For the biographer, this course of things had both advantages and disadvantages. He could now, with some authority, draw upon the evidence put forth in his subject's fiction, but he had also to be vigilant about not violating the work's autonomous character. The temptation to rely on a writer's own version of his life must have been intensely felt, for

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some biographers became particularly strenuous defenders of their subjects' capacity to invent. In the preface to his life of Proust, George Painter wrote:

> It would be absurd to suppose that Proust's greatness is in any degree lessened by his reliance on reality. His work is an illustration of Wordsworth's distinction between Fancy and Imagination—between the art which invents what has never existed, and the art which discovers the inner meaning of what exists.

No one, surely, would contest the justice of these remarks; all the same, Painter elsewhere notes that one of Proust's more sordid sexual practices "is confirmed by independent witnesses, and still more conclusively by its unmistakable though disguised appearance in his novel." And the fact that he provided two indexes, one of "Persons and Places" and another for "Characters and Places" taken from *Remembrance of Things Past,* is itself a comment on how inextricable imagination and actual experience are in Proust's great work.

Painter's is, to my mind, the most remarkable of modern literary biographies. Full of high gossip, digressions, and panoramic scenes of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, it is a work that emulates its subject in the fullest sense, employing Proust's own narrative scheme to re-create the very temper of an era. His acquaintance with Proust's novel is so compendious that Painter never fails to illuminate a given scene in the life with its appropriate echo in the work. Even phrases are traced from their inception in a conversation or letter to their inevitable appearance in the book. Throughout volume I, *The Early Years,* Proust's childhood, a delicate membrane of sensation through which the world in all its infinite vividness and subtlety had to pass before it could be known, is evoked in lavish prose. So intimate is Painter with his subject that he responds to the secondary characters in Proust's life much as Proust himself did in his novel. They are like two conspiratorial accomplices comparing their notes on others. Proust offers his impressions, based on having observed them in life, and Painter supplements these with the diaries and copious memoirs made available to him, a privilege of the living. Proust often disappears entirely from the scene of his own biography. Pages at a time are given over to "famous" and "celebrated" anecdotes, retorts, exchanges to which Proust was never even a witness. Painter includes them because they form a portrait of the vanished epoch made immortal in Proust's novel.

Painter's tone in the first volume is one of relative detachment, although his enthusiasm for the cleverness and brilliance of the people he writes about is ill concealed. It is not until well into *The Later Years* that he makes a rather striking self-disclosure, followed later on by a passage equal in its dramatic import to the moment when a gambler shows his cards. Discussing Proust's attitude toward Saint-Beuve, he suddenly departs from the subject at hand to reveal his own biographical stance:

> The biographer must discover, beneath the mask of the artist's every-day, objective life, the secret life from which he extracted his work; show how, in the apparently sterile persons and places of that external life, he found the hidden, universal meanings which are the themes of his book; and reveal the drama of the contrast and interaction between his daily existence and his incommensurably deeper life as a creator. *A La Recherche,* of all great works of art, cannot be fully understood until the life in time of which it is a symbolic reconstruction in eternity is known.

Here is the statement, in theoretical terms, of Painter's method (one could also see it as a disguised bid to make his own book indispensable to Proust's). Toward the close of the second volume, a far more personal revelation occurs. In the midst of recounting the reactions of Proust's friends to the publication of his novel, he announces what has been, after all, the grand theme of his biography: the brilliance and splendor of the French nobility, whose dying moment Proust captured and preserved forever:

> In the final glory of their sunset, which coincided with the fifty years of his own existence, they had fashioned in miniature the last social culture that our world has seen, a beautiful, fugitive and irreplaceable thing that history produced and history has destroyed. In their drawing rooms flourished a gay elegance, a fantastic individuality, a chivalrous freedom, a living interplay of minds, morals, and emotions. They gave their last young blood in the war, then perished because they had

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served art instead of power. It is our duty as twentieth-century barbarians to salute the nineteenth-century civilisation which we have overwhelmed.

Whatever one's political beliefs, it is impossible not to admire the splendid wealth of feeling displayed in this openly reactionary celebration of the past. With all the fervor of Balzac lamenting the loss of *his* ideal nobility, the Royalists who rose up against the post-Revolutionary republic, Painter finds *Remembrance of Things Past* a monument alone worth all the cruelties that marked the reign of the French aristocracy.

Biographers naturally tend to become devoted to their subjects (if they don't end up loathing them), and one of the problems before them is to conceal their inevitable bias. Leon Edel, whom some critics have accused of partisanship and even idolatry in his life of Henry James, is more unsparing in his reliance on the unkindly Freud than is Painter; and yet his biography, like Painter's the portrait of a period no less than of a single figure, is curiously unintrusive. One may question whether we have to know every private detail (what Ellmann calls "the precise anatomical convolutions") of a writer's life. But once a biographer has decided that Freudian theories of personality are vital to the work of interpretation, then it would seem to follow that Freud's belief in the primacy of sexuality has to be taken up as well. Edel's biography is a magnificent, sprawling, eloquent work, composed with style and fine restraint; and yet one detects on occasion the hand of an eager proselyte occupied in settling old scores, refuting others' memoirs, and glossing over the issue of James's sexual dormancy. In a work of more than two thousand pages about a man notorious for his sedentary ways, surely one could expect to have some definitive word on this ever-intrusive theme.

This is not to say that Edel is entirely evasive. He does note at the beginning that James "remained celibate," even though later on there is some speculation about whether he actually consummated an affair with the sculptor Hendrik Andersen. Quick to refute the suggestions of other critics that an "obscure hurt" James suffered in youth was really some form of castration, Edel never

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finds it necessary to provide his own explanation of the extreme fastidiousness of James's nature, a characteristic important because it informed his prose. Writing to the French novelist Paul Bourget, James complained of the "out-and-out eroticism" of Bourget's latest book: "In a word, all this is far from being life as I feel it, as I see it, as I know it, as I wish to know it." Edel responds to this tirade by joining in with his own castigation of Bourget. Some of James's most revealing statements only provoke his biographer to embarrassed shifts of attention away from their import, rather than to close scrutiny; he is like a host in the presence of a guest who has all at once become too voluble.

Edel does finally, in volume 3, address himself directly to the question of James's sexuality, with considerable tact. His theory is that James sublimated all his erotic feeling in conquering "the available and compliant Muse of the writing table," just as, during an emotional crisis late in life, James performed a Freudian self-analysis by composing the stories that deal with his own youth (transposed to the young girls who figure in *What Maisie Knew, The Awkward Age,* and "The Turn of the Screw"). Edel's constant recourse to Freud enables him to make some quite daring ventures into slips of the tongue, dream interpretation, and the evaluation of symptoms; yet he seems too often willing to take James's own word for things. In his introduction to the second volume, Edel provides a fine summation of his method:

> James knew that the literary art is one of the most personal of arts—even while it insists upon its impersonality. In spinning tales, in using words, in developing a style, a writer asserts his characteristic being as well as his genius. His work, in the end, becomes a kind of supreme biography.

Having said this, he is free to construe the life from the work, just as Painter has done. This shouldn't mean, however, that a biographer has to imitate the delicacy with which his subject treated his own experience.

Edel has emulated James in another way, and with a more impressive result: he has made use of the techniques of fiction to enliven his biography. In depicting scenes from literary history—the salon of Flaubert, the visits with Turgenev, the dramatic moment when Shaw, Wells, and Arnold Bennett converge to review the opening night of James's play *Guy Domville*—Edel exploits the dramatic resources of the novel to great effect. He has remembered that the world through which James moved looked different from our own, and so will reproduce a scene in Boston, Concord, or New York by describing it as it then was. Or he will paraphrase James's letters and journals in such a way that he appears to be writing his biography from within, observing with a novelist's omniscience the landscapes James recorded and even the sensations that accompanied his contemplation of them. Edel has at his command the whole of nineteenth-century literature, and is thus able to turn a chance encounter with Dickens or a glimpse of Matthew Arnold in Rome into an evocation of time and the vanquishing of one literary tradition by another.

Whether because he has appropriated this narrative, Jamesian "point-of-view" or simply because he still holds James in awe, Edel can occasionally become portentous in a manner that recalls his subject's style. In Switzerland, we are told, the future novelist (then aged twelve) "seized the romance and the ruin of Europe, the contradictions of old and new, the symbols human and material of the old feudal order." In volume 2, significantly called *The Conquest of London* (this title, like "The Siege of Paris," is borrowed from James, but his biographer was under no obligation to take it up without a trace of irony), this author who "would create a kind of imperium of letters" is compared even to Marcus Aurelius: "He would offer the world the countenance of a conquerer who was, as Arnold said, tender and blameless—*tendentemque manus ripae ulterioris amore.*" The closing pages of his biography express this reverence in a more tempered voice, and with fine authority. Their success is owed, I think, to the fact that we have been thoroughly prepared for such a lavish evaluation. And yet one ends up wishing that Edel had made more of the contest between biographer and subject that he speaks of in the introduction to volume 3. At this point in the story, James had destroyed a great deal of evidence about his relationship with the minor American novelist Constance

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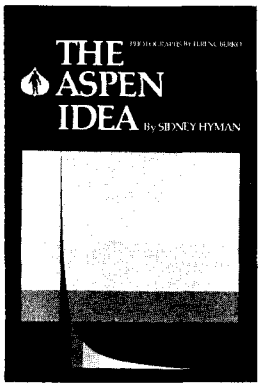
Fenimore Woolson, and Edel triumphantly announces that he has managed to discover the truth despite his subject's determination to "equalize the struggle by enraging the historian and spurring him on to use higher skills of deduction and more art." Any biographer will endorse this critical intransigence; and it is a pity that Edel has chosen to retreat too often from his own well-defended position.

James Joyce took no such chances with his biographer. "Out of consideration for himself as well as posterity," so Richard Ellmann puts it, Joyce selected his own biographer, Herbert Gorman, and then directed him in his research just as he had Stuart Gilbert, Frank Budgen, and the contributors to *Our Exagmination Round His Factification for Incamination of Work in Progress*, the collection of essays on *Finnegans Wake*. When Gorman's manuscript was complete, Joyce virtually rewrote it, deleting passages and inserting footnotes. Whatever advantage his first biographer had in knowing Joyce personally was no doubt forfeited by these unsubtle interventions.

Ellmann himself had no such difficulties, and his biography of Joyce possesses a sort of independence that even verges once in a while on condescension. One consequence of the intimacy biographers now have with their subjects, in our new climate of candor, has been their adoption of an occasional bantering, sarcastic tone. Not only is no man a hero to his valet, but in this democratic era the valet has become increasingly disrespectful. Henri Troyat referring to Tolstoy as Leo and satirizing his moral vacillations; Francis Steegmuller mocking Flaubert's obtuse insensitivity to his mistress, Louise Colet—this note of insolence among the ranks of mutinous contemporary biographers can certainly be heard in Ellmann's *Joyce*, as if the creator of Leopold Bloom deserved to have his own biography written from an antiheroic stance.

Ellmann's command of the facts about Joyce's life is astonishing; no instance of irrational or dubious behavior is allowed to go unexamined. His great familiarity with Joyce prompts Ellmann to call him "obnoxious" or rebuke him for his intemperate ways. Time and again, he deflates with amused irony Joyce's solemn proclamations about his art. Quoting a letter in which Joyce refers to himself as "the Bard," Ellmann adds: "The Bard had now no money and no immediate goal." Of the disparity between Joyce's literary achievement and his chronic irresponsibility, he writes: "Shem's artistic miracle in *Finnegans Wake* is to make the dead speak; in Trieste Joyce had to achieve not only this resuscitation by art, but also the homelier feat, with his creditors, of making the vociferous be dumb." And of Joyce's reaction to the outbreak of World War II, Ellmann relates that it concerned him only because "it was distracting the world from reading *Finnegans Wake*, in which the unimportance of wars in the total cycle of human activity was made perfectly clear."

Despite these comical asides, Ellmann's generosity toward Joyce is obvious throughout; as he makes clear in his introduction, no reverential view of Joyce will suffice to capture the blend of high aesthetic ideals and ordinary failings that composed his personality. They were the components as well of *Ulysses*—Dedalus and Bloom deriving from



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the two sides of Joyce's nature: "The reconciling factor is the imagination, which, working through wit, brings opposite ends of the mind together, and makes our seeming unlikenesses suddenly gregarious." Joyce, like Proust, fashioned this realm of imagination exclusively from life, and it was Ellmann's audacity that made him capable of apprehending that life in all its contradictions.

There is one point about which Ellmann has been less than candid, though not by choice; it concerns, again, the question of sexuality. He touches more than once on Joyce's peculiar sexual proclivities, and mentions in passing that "He and Nora exchanged letters much more open than Bloom's and Martha Clifford's." It happens that Ellmann was prevented by Joyce's estate from publishing these letters, until recently, and I understand from those who have read them (in the Joyce Collection at Cornell) that they were indeed rather embarrassing. Whether the biography would have been enhanced by these letters is doubtful; probably there is a last frontier of decorum that deserves to remain standing. The recent revelations and disputes about Wittgenstein's homosexuality, for example, can have little to do with his philosophical work; and yet one could argue that imaginative writers, in liege as they are to the unconscious, must have their lives more brutally interrogated than others. There is a danger of becoming clinical, and one fears the sort of biography that could emerge if the desire to tell all were to supersede the discriminations of tact and privacy that have until now been recognized, however nominally. Biography no less than the unconscious requires a censor to make its findings palatable.

III

Contemporary biography has taken so many diverse courses that it resists ambitious generalities. To begin with, one would have to distinguish between the practices of England and America. Over there, the web of personal relationships is more intricate than it is in America, so that we have Virginia Woolf's nephew writing her biography and Nigel Nicolson writing about his own parents. Moreover, anyone who has ever belonged to the upper class or the intelligentsia may claim at least a modest celebrity. Evelyn Waugh's diaries created a genuine sensation when excerpts from them first appeared in the Sunday *London Times;* and the *Memoirs* of Lady Ottoline Morrell, whom almost everyone acknowledged to be a dull *poseuse*, have found an avid readership, simply because her salon was populated by Bloomsbury. Our literary figures have always been homelier and less clever than the English, so that our store of anecdote is soon depleted. Even so, James Mellow's recent book on Gertrude Stein, *Charmed Circle,* has enjoyed a certain vogue, and I suppose we shall never hear the end of Paris in the twenties.

The absence of a dense social milieu in which to situate the lives of American writers has not, unfortunately, prevented a number of our biographers from producing the sort of immense works for which Lytton Strachey had such contempt, "those two fat volumes with their ill-digested masses of material, their slipshod style, their tone of tedious panegyric, their lamentable lack of selection, of detachment, of design." Strachey had in mind a tendency of nineteenth-century biography, but his remarks bear on the present. In too many instances, biographies of modern American authors have capitulated to our national inclination toward the portentous, the grandiose, the massive. As if to emulate the vast edifices that now dominate our landscape, such biographies as Mark Schorer's *Sinclair Lewis*, John Unterecker's *Voyager: A Life of Hart Crane*, Louis Sheaffer's recent biography of Eugene O'Neill, and Joseph Blotner's two-volume *William Faulkner* depend on sheer size to compel authority. Their subjects, entombed in a mass of documentation, emerge from these interminable works as figures whose lives were of a virtually unnatural duration and complexity. What Anatole France said of *A la Recherche du temps perdu,* that "Life is too short and Proust is too long," is surely true of these biographies.

What is one to make, for example, of the biography of Sinclair Lewis, a work that prompted Edmund Wilson to wonder if Schorer had "the least sympathy with the personality of the author or any real interest in his work"? For more than eight hundred pages, Schorer appears to be struggling against his own verdict, finally delivered in the book's

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last paragraph, that Lewis "was one of the worst writers in American literature." After this astonishing indictment, the qualification that "without his writing, we can hardly imagine ourselves" seems rather lame. Nor does Schorer's prose style improve matters. His bantering disapproval, the precious exclamatory rejoinders, a tone of sarcasm intended to demonstrate intimacy with his subject—these are tactics that serve only to subvert the importance of his enterprise. Moreover, the tedious welter of detail soon becomes impenetrable: Schorer is always correcting others' accounts and reporting on his research within the text, with the result that his narrative is exposed, its design laid bare. We are made too aware of the artisan's hand at work in the labors of restoration.

In the case of Blotner's *Faulkner,* these defects are even more extreme. Blotner has the advantage of having come to know Faulkner some years before his death, but he forfeits through an excess of decorum the potential vividness of portrayal that should have been the result of their encounters. In a work of nearly two thousand pages, he never manages to give a satisfactory interpretation of his subject's peculiar marriage, or even to discuss Faulkner's attitude toward women. Instead he insists on displaying a panoply of data so elaborate that one is tempted to speculate whether any life could be worth such unremitting scrutiny. No fact about Faulkner has eluded Blotner's research; and yet the absence of more than casual interpretive remarks could be said to prove Faulkner's contention that "A book is the writer's secret life, the dark twin of a man: you can't reconcile them."

Critics were terribly hard on this biography when it first appeared, and with reason: on the whole, it suffers from a failure of imagination and a slavish deference to fact. But I suspect that some of their animus can be attributed to the book's sheer length; reviewers could only have responded with irritation to a work that requires a full forty-hour week to read. (So daunting is the vastness of this biography that even Blotner is often lost in it; on a few occasions, anecdotes are told twice, and often the same information is cited in several different contexts.) And yet there is an undeniable grandeur in this enterprise; as with all great scholarly projects, it testifies to the human capacity to labor and leave artifacts of our existence in the world. There is much to be learned from the miraculous accumulation of anecdotes and conversations, the sprawling histories of towns in the South, the talmudical columns of reference notes. Faulkner's life was not, as commonly supposed, meager in events. There was, to begin with, a family legacy rich in lore. The stories Blotner relates of blood feuds, murders, illicit business deals are well worth hearing, especially in view of Faulkner's own fictional treatment of them. The detailed portrait of his great-grandfather, a novelist of some repute in his day, the background of the Civil War, and the scenes of literary life in New Orleans during the 1920s—all deserve the close attention Blotner gives them. Moreover, Faulkner was a sympathetic figure, unlike the grotesque, pathetic Sinclair Lewis, and Blotner has managed to depict with a novelist's eye some of the more bizarre episodes in his life. Faulkner the negligent postmaster of Oxford, Mississippi; the failed *fin-de-siècle* poet; the young man who joined the British Royal Air Force by forging papers and cultivating an assumed English accent—these were only some of Faulkner's curious poses. Through Blotner's tireless research, the manner in which "elements of the life got into the writing" can be discerned, even if the two are never made to converge.

Perhaps the problem with these biographies is that they are too much like life; the world presented to us in biographies of our near-contemporaries is our own—a world of airports, automobile trips, modern cities—so that its very familiarity soon exhausts us. Blotner's biography of Faulkner, for example, diminishes in interest as it moves away from the nineteenth-century South of his childhood toward the modern era, and the last several hundred pages are little more than a chronicle of what it means to be a celebrity in our time. Interviews, award ceremonies, and transatlantic flights constitute the scenes of Schorer's *Lewis* and of Blotner's second volume, and while they were obligated to record them, their narratives could have been considerably more selective. Laboring under the compulsion to be definitive, and faced with a subject whose proximity to the present

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usually means that his life can be reconstructed on almost a daily basis, one can produce a virtually infinite biography.

With a subject whose life has receded in time, the rewards of research can be dramatic. There it is a question of retrieving not only a given individual's life, but the temper of an era. R. W. Stallman's biography of Stephen Crane, to my mind the most brilliant of recent American biographies, recovers Crane's life with a fidelity that verges on the heroic. Of course, Stallman could not have chosen a more fascinating character than the "doom-eager" Crane, whose exploits during a brief, amazing life were often front-page news. Rather than speculate about his character, Stallman allows events themselves to illustrate what drove Crane to the dangerous adventures he had as a reporter in the Greco-Turkish, Cuban, and Spanish-American wars, all the while depicting with a historian's large canvas the battles through which Crane moved in his nihilistic, insouciant pursuit of experience. And when Stallman relates the near-disaster of Crane's escape from a sinking boat off the coast of Florida, his narrative rivals "The Open Boat," Crane's masterpiece about the same episode. Citing as evidence navigational charts, logs, weather reports for that day in 1897, the research is a triumph of ingenuity. Always Stallman draws on Crane's fine reportage to supplement his own; and when he possesses the record of a conversation, Stallman appropriates it for his narrative without calling obtrusive attention to his source. The result is an astonishing tableau of life in Florida, New York, rural England, Cuba, Greece, and the West (to name only a few of Crane's locales) just before the turn of the century.

Richard Sewall's biography of Emily Dickinson occurs at an even further remove in time, so he has devoted an entire volume to her milieu, providing ample biographies of her family and even of townspeople whose relationships to her were often of a rather provisional order. Perhaps because so little is known about her life, previous biographers have tended to be psychoanalytic in their approach. Sewall's method is to contend openly with them, disputing evidence, disproving speculation, and finally proposing his own hypotheses. Because "she lived and moved, however restlessly, in the dimension prepared for her by the New England Puritans," Sewall has to establish the mood and temperament, even the language, of the period before he can embark on his tentative investigation of Emily Dickinson's own life. There is a great deal of negative evidence (discussions, for example, of what could not have happened), conjecture, and vague inference in the second volume, but even so, the biography justifies two volumes, if only to make accessible the distant world in which Emily lived.

The impulse to write "definitive" biographies is relatively new, and seems to have arisen in conjunction with the flourishing of the academic study of literature in America. There was a time when biographers, whether or not they were associated with universities, approached their subjects without the current reverence for pure research. Philip Horton's biography of Hart Crane, published in 1937, and John Berryman's famous biography of Stephen Crane have not been supplanted by later works on the same subjects, even if, in the case of Stephen Crane, Stallman's biography has proven the more durable. Horton and Berryman were literary in the best sense, and the books they wrote were at once intuitive and scholarly. The same holds true for Arthur Mizener's biography of Fitzgerald, *The Far Side of Paradise,* and Andrew Turnbull's *Thomas Wolfe.* Turnbull's narrative is rather breathless ("Abroad with Aline, he added Vienna, Prague, and Nuremburg to his collection of cities"), tending to rush from one event to another without pause; but his subject is revealed with remarkable clarity all the same. Mizener went so far as to suppress the story of Fitzgerald's love affair with Sheilah Graham in the first edition of his biography, out of deference to her; yet his work possesses a crucial vindicating element: the knowledge of his subject's character, a knowledge for which no amount of research can ever compensate. Until biographers recognize the limits of documentation as a mode of yielding truth, biography will continue to relinquish the claim it once had as a literary form.

Confronted with this proliferation of biographies and biographical approaches, one can only hope to audit the subtle modulations biography has lately undergone. Even in the

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face of ever bolder incursions into the labyrinth of personality, Henry James was prophetic: "Never say you know the last word about any human heart!"

Orchidomania

ORCHIDS: FLOWERS OF ROMANCE AND MYSTERY. *By Jack Kramer. Harry N. Abrams, Inc. $35.*

Reviewed by JOHN HOPE FRANKLIN

It would be a gross error in judgment and taste to classify this extraordinarily handsome book as one more coffee table adornment. It is certainly that, but it is much more. Its author, Jack Kramer, who has written many books on orchids and other flowers and who has collected and cultivated these flowers for many years, would scarcely have been content to put together a work merely to catch one's eye. To be sure, it is not a book on how to grow orchids, for Kramer has already performed that task well, as have Rebecca Northen, Charles Curtis, Jeanne Garrard, and many others. Nor is it strictly a scientific study of the family *Orchidaceae,* such as Carl Withner, Alex Hawkes, Calaway Dodson, and Robert Gillespie have written. Instead it is a comprehensive introduction to the history, the provenience, the uses, the drama, color, form, and even the sex life of this hauntingly beautiful family that numbers more than thirty thousand species growing wild all over the world.

While Kramer does not assume that the reader knows a great deal about orchids, he is careful to place his discussion on a level that will appeal to the intelligent, inquisitive person—one who will immediately recognize the subject as worthy of sensitive, even sophisticated treatment. He is particularly concerned with the place of orchids in the ancient cultures of the Orient, how they came to the attention of the peoples of the West, and what impact their discovery had on the peoples of Europe and America. The flowers that were called *lan hua* by Confucius were cultivated by the Chinese and Japanese in the eighteenth century, and were as highly regarded by them as they had been by the sage of the ancient Orient. And when the Europeans discovered orchids in that same century and brought them home, their enthusiasm for such species as the *Oncidium altissimum* and the *Epidendrum ciliare* matched that of the Orientals. Eventually, through trial and error as well as through scientific observation and experiment, the orchids of the tropics were grown and propagated in the temperate and colder climates of Europe and America, where countless new species were soon discovered.

By the middle of the nineteenth century "orchidomania," the craze for orchids, had swept over Europe and was spreading to the Americas. The stimulus was owing in part to the cultivation of spectacular species and hybrids, such as some South American cattleyas that sold for as much as $600 in the Stevens auction rooms at Covent Garden. It was also owing to the interest of wealthy patrons who built elaborate greenhouses and engaged highly successful growers like Conrad Loddiges and James Veitch to produce the finest flowers possible without regard to the cost. An important consideration, moreover, was the increased respectability of orchid culture provided by scientists such as John Lindley, whose *The Genera and Species of Orchidaceous Plants* began to appear in 1830, and Charles Darwin, who in 1862 published *On the Various Contrivances by Which British and Foreign Orchids Are Fertilised by Insects.* After the appearance of such works one did not need to feel that he was indulging merely in an expensive hobby. One could fancy himself—or at least his grower—as another Loddiges or even a Darwin!

Orchid culture could not remain the exclusive domain of the wealthy any more than conveniences or even luxuries could be cornered by people of large means or inherited privilege. The time would come, in the middle of the twentieth century, when orchidomania would reach the common man. Low-budget greenhouses and window greenhouses placed orchid culture under glass

JOHN HOPE FRANKLIN is president of Phi Beta Kappa and is John Matthews Manly Distinguished Service Professor of American History at the University of Chicago. He has grown orchids for many years.

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within the reach of thousands who previously had to content themselves with occasional visits to the public conservatory. Wardian cases, fluorescent grow-lights, and even windowsills became common sites for orchid culture, as horticultural shows, commercial orchid growers, and enthusiastic writers persuaded everyone interested that they too could grow orchids. In the United States today there are more than eighteen thousand members of the American Orchid Society, and there are more than two hundred and fifty local orchid societies. It is possible that these figures represent only a fraction of those who are actively engaged in growing orchids.

As knowledge of orchids has increased and spread, some of the mistaken ideas about them have begun to disappear, although the flowers themselves remain romantic and mysterious. Kramer reminds us that they are not only among the most numerous but also among the hardiest of plants. Any longtime association with them will convince one that delicacy may describe their colors but not their capacity to withstand mistreatment or even abuse. He also reminds us that few of them have the traditional orchid color and that the dominant colorings are yellow and brown. While some of the blossoms do indeed have the appearance of what the popular notion regards as an orchid, meaning cattleya, the majority of them range in size from the spectacular *Odontoglossum grande* to the tiny *Oncidium pumillum*. While the cattleya or cymbidium that one purchases from the florist has no odor, because it has been severed from the plant for days, about 80 percent of all orchids have some kind of fragrance. They have many uses, from the limited use of their roots for tea and broth to the almost universal use of *Vanilla planifola* for flavoring cakes and ice cream.

This book has many rewarding features, not the least of which is the delightful foreword by Anthony West, who calls orchids "the most extraordinary of flowers," which almost always "have a suggestion of otherworldliness about them." Another is the text by Jack Kramer, which is as felicitous as it is informed. And then there are the plates—227 of them, 92 in color—that give some idea of the range of the family *Orchidaceae,* in tax-

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onomy as well as in size and color. I am particularly pleased that Kramer gives as much attention to the botanicals, which have little or no value in the florist shop, as to the cattleya that is so popular at junior and senior proms. Finally, there is a helpful discussion of the orchid genera, from *Acampe* to *Zygopetalum,* and a brief list of books for further reading. Place your copy of this work on your coffee table, but do so with pride.

Homely Madonna

GEORGE ELIOT: THE EMERGENT SELF. *By Ruby V. Redinger. Knopf. $15.*

GEORGE ELIOT AND HER WORLD. *By Marghanita Laski. Transatlantic Arts. $8.75.*

GEORGE ELIOT: HER BELIEFS AND HER ART. *By Neil Roberts. University of Pittsburgh Press. $15.95.*

Reviewed by SONYA RUDIKOFF

George Eliot, sacred and revered Victorian novelist, does not nowadays have a cozy band around her, like the Janeites, remembering, cherishing, savoring, and sharing their treasure. She did have such people in the years of her fame. There were those Sunday receptions when she sat in a chair by the fire and prayerful worshipers came individually to sit next to her, to hear the low, beautiful voice, to look into the magnificent eyes, to gather wisdom from the secular saint, and then give place to the next votary. Women adored George Eliot, especially younger women, who referred to her as "The Darling," "The Dearest," "Mother." Men admired, respected, and were charmed by her—all those Victorians like Sidgwick, Myers, T. H. Huxley, Frederic Harrison, Tyndall, Morley, Bagehot, Jowett, Trevelyan. Americans adored her too, like the young Henry James:

> Yes, behold me literally in love with this great horse-faced blue-stocking. I don't know in what the charm lies, but it is thoroughly potent. An admirable physiognomy—a delightful expression, a voice soft and rich as that of a counselling angel—a mingled sagacity and sweetness—a broad hint of a great underlying world of reserve, knowledge, pride and power—a great feminine dignity and character in those massively plain features—a hundred conflicting shades of consciousness and simpleness—shyness and frankness—graciousness and remote indifference—these are some of the more definite elements of her personality.

G. H. Lewes took to calling her "Madonna," and she dressed in black satin with a lace mantilla over her beautiful hair. Some people were amused that these two social outcasts should be holding court in a Regents Park house called The Priory—Dickens spoke of attending divine service there! The renown and adoration went on and on, even to the publication of *Wise, Witty, and Tender Sayings in Prose and Verse,* culled from George Eliot's writings, and later *The George Eliot Birthday Book.*

At the distance we are from all that, it only offends. What could have moved her contemporaries to such extravagance of feeling? Then, from 1885 on, silence. In 1919 Virginia Woolf made an effort to celebrate the centenary but was hampered by indifference among sophisticated Edwardians and Georgians who had gone beyond the Victorian worthies. J. W. Cross's biography, so soon after George Eliot's death, precipitated the great decline. His deletion of everything revealing, piquant, harsh, unworthy, or not sufficiently noble or reverent bequeathed to the world the sanitized George Eliot, an image from which she was not to be rescued until much later. The remarkable accomplishments of Gordon S. Haight are primarily responsible for the truer knowledge we have of this great writer, and other efforts of scholarship and criticism in the past three decades have contributed greatly to a newer, post-Victorian appreciation. Much of the scholarly effort has been devoted to reconstructing and discovering what Cross left out—an almost archaeological project of uncovering the vivid life and feelings beneath the public persona.

The three books under review continue with that effort, and are therefore worth noticing. Professor Redinger's study proceeds explicitly from Cross's biography, through the letters he did not use or was refused permission to use or see, and draws upon other

SONYA RUDIKOFF's articles have appeared in *Commentary,* the *Hudson Review, Dissent,* and other journals.

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sources as well. Her interest is less in the completed image than, as the title indicates, in the *emergent* self, the emotional and intellectual struggles that produced the writer and sage; and her study really ends with the publication of *Felix Holt* in 1866. Dr. Roberts is interested in George Eliot's social, moral, and philosophical ideas as they are worked out imaginatively, and Marghanita Laski seems still to be fighting the old Victorian adulation with witty iconoclastic analysis, ending her brief essay with George Eliot's own plea for Maggie Tulliver: "a character essentially noble but liable to great error—error that is anguish to its own nobleness." The great interest of this book, however, lies in its illustrations. Some are the familiar plates found in every George Eliot biography, but others are less widely known: interiors of Arbury Hall where George Eliot's father was employed as agent, of Foleshill, Griff House, and South Farm, Astley Castle, and other scenes of childhood and youth drawn upon for *Scenes of Clerical Life;* drawings or engravings of places like Bad Homburg and the old Frankfurt synagogue that George Eliot and Lewes visited when she was meditating on *Daniel Deronda;* many sketches of George Eliot, and early photographs showing her distinctive ugliness and her equally distinctive smile; a late photograph of her brother, Isaac; and glimpses of Holly Lodge, The Priory, and Witley Heights in all its hideous Victorian magnificence.

Still, she is not an especially endearing figure, and a study of her emerging self makes her not more attractive but, if anything, less. In fact, the self explored and observed in Professor Redinger's study becomes peculiarly repellent as the exhaustive project develops, perhaps because the self under scrutiny here is the willing, self-actualizing, individuating self as it defines, separates, and liberates itself. A reconstruction of the original Mary Ann Evans from out of the mists of Cross's biography follows the progress of the intense, ugly, unhappy girl who adored her brother, who was sent away from home at an early age, and whose many talents and accomplishments served a passionate, ambitious, even violent nature. Evangelical influence on her religious and emotional life gave her a discipline, and, when her faith failed her at the age of twenty-two, the intellectual habits were already established. Much of this childhood and youth was full of despair, anguish, the desire to please a censorious brother, rebellion, anger, fantasy, and disappointment.

The Mill on the Floss of 1860, and "Brother and Sister," a sonnet sequence written in 1869, are the chief sources for our knowledge of those early struggles and emotions—"the fear, the love, the primal passionate store." It is Professor Redinger's thesis that George Eliot's infantile guilt, reinforced by Evangelicalism, was a constraining and inhibiting force until her maturity, and that the struggle to master this guilt and to control the self tempered both the passions and the intellect of this remarkable young woman. The writing of fiction, equivalent to indulgence in fantasy, grew out of her struggle with "the Self that self restrains," and only much later was she able to resolve the guilt and liberate her imagination.

Some readers may dispute this psychology of creativity, even those who accept the psychology it implies, and of course all the questions raised about psychohistory and psychobiography are pertinent here. The brother and sister relation, in life and in imagination, is thoughtfully examined, however, both in its retrospective aspect and in its later effect on George Eliot's actions. These include her last appeal to her censorious brother on the occasion of her only legal marriage at nearly sixty, and his acknowledgment of her existence after twenty-three years of silence. The record of her struggles with her father, her brother, her own egotism, with John Chapman and his circle, and, after her union with Lewes, with the social and intellectual world, and her triumphant assumption of moral authority toward society itself, is an absorbing story. Yet accounts of her charm, her voice, her sympathy, and her eyes simply cannot erase the stronger impression, gained from her letters: that of an unpleasant, self-concerned, self-righteous, self-justifying person who heavily and humorlessly insisted upon her own consequence.

Curiously enough, the time in her life when she was least appealing began when she went away with Lewes. The irregular union, the need for duplicity or isolation, and then,

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when she began to write, the need for anonymity, all made her defensive. Later, she had to be so entirely protected from the world that Lewes became duenna, stage manager, secretary, agent, parent, protector, financial director, and general master of ceremonies, and thus nourished the monumental self-regard that appears constantly in her letters from then on. She was more spirited when she was working on the *Westminster Review,* living in the impossible Chapman household, having good times with Herbert Spencer, and writing witty, irreverent letters to her friends the Brays, back in Coventry. That "emergent self" which Professor Redinger heralds and celebrates—and the approval contemporary feminists bestow on Lewes's devotion to her—would perhaps not evoke George Eliot's own approval. She was not a feminist, nor did she approve marital relations such as her own; and she was not blind to the tragic moral consequences of the very egotism she struggled against.

The Leweses cherished their "dual solitude." She needed him and he her—the competent, ugly, intelligent woman, translator of Strauss, Spinoza, Feuerbach, and the slightly unsavory but extremely capable London polymath. Each had had a story of intense passions, betrayals, wasted hopes, tangled relationships, and they could share a sympathetic transcendence of the soiled bondage of the past. His association with Fourierist ideas and phalansteries, hers with the disordered Chapman household; his condoning of his wife's adulteries, her passions for older men, other women's husbands—these merely reinforced the aura of sexual irregularity that surrounded them then and has endured even to this day. There is still a suggestion of an intense sensuality, a demonic or uncivilized or vulgar sexual relation that went beyond propriety, a suggestion undoubtedly left over from the very act of social defiance. That sexual relation, it is thought, was what enabled him to write his important *Life of Goethe* and her to become a novelist. And this is the modern myth about George Eliot, replacing Victorian disapproval with contemporary sanction—despite certain inconvenient details such as George Eliot's confiding to a friend that Lewes was not at all "sensual" in their intimate life.

One difficulty with hypothesizing sexual fulfillment, or liberation of the will, or release of forbidden fantasy as the determining factor in George Eliot's becoming a novelist is that none of these is accessible to further substantiation. Also implied in such hypotheses is the neglect of her very explicit interests in realism, her sympathy, and the ethical residues of her lost Christian faith, which are extremely well substantiated. Then, too, writing novels in the middle of the nineteenth century—like doing screen plays early in the twentieth, or poetry or plays or journalism at other crucial times—was simply entering into the public literary discourse by means of the prevailing modes and conventions. Translating religious documents of a new and controversial nature was done in the same spirit by the young Coventry intellectual. Similarly, the act of rebellion and self-definition in 1842, when she refused to go to church, was perfectly appropriate and topical in relation to the advanced thought of the time. Professor Redinger is not ignorant of such matters, but her own interest has been so thoroughly absorbed by George Eliot's massive self-concern that Evangelicalism, the rise of scientific inquiry and proof, the economic and industrial history of the period, and much else are scanted. The extremely close psychological scrutiny, then, tends to obscure the surrounding world and its important effect in determining the quality of the "emergent self."

George Eliot passionately desired the approval of her brother, even when she deliberately acted contrary to his known beliefs; proud of her earnings from writing, independent, she nevertheless depended on the regular income from money left by her father. Her mature feelings about her own popularity as a writer, her relation to her public, and her desire for substantial earnings are obviously complex matters. There is ample evidence that they troubled her throughout her career, engaging her imagination profoundly, as in *Silas Marner* and *Daniel Deronda.* She justified herself repeatedly. It was a principal theme of her relations with her publishers. In fact, it was over money that she broke with them, encouraged by Lewes to accept another offer more than double what they were expecting to pay her for *Romola,* and astronomically more than the isolated,

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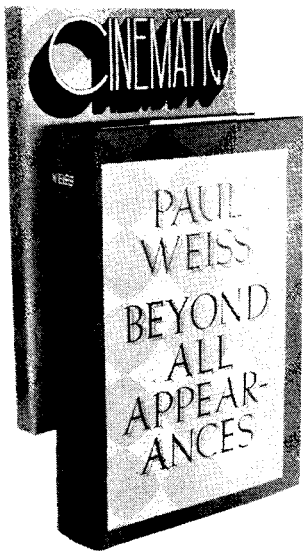

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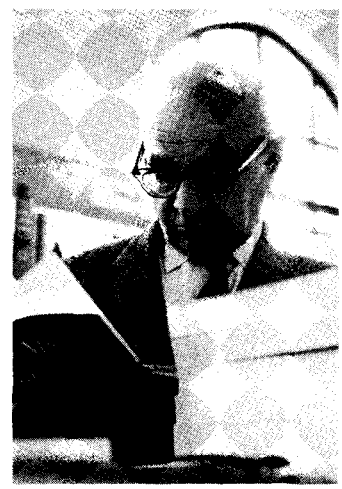

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self-ostracized pseudonymous author of *Scenes of Clerical Life* might have expected or received barely five years before. Even then, before her great sales and fame, she had about £100 a year and earned another £130 or so from the *Westminster Review*. Lewes earned between £300 and £600 from writing—in 1857, for example, he earned £433.9.2—of which £100–200 went to support his wife and her many children, whether his or not. But George Eliot's own feelings about money, or about proving her worth to her brother or the world, cloud the understanding here.

During the same period, the Carlyles lived on about £300 a year. Marghanita Laski, perhaps deceived by recent inflation, says the Leweses were "poor," but descriptions of the Carlyles' life do not suggest poverty, nor would 90 percent of British adult male wage earners have considered either the Carlyles or the Leweses poor—workers who lived on an annual wage of between £50 and £100. In fact, even toward the end of the century, £700 was still thought to be a very comfortable upper-middle-class income, and fewer than 300,000 households enjoyed incomes of £700 or above in a population of 44.5 million. Thus, when we find George Eliot (or Lewes negotiating for her) involved with sums of £7,000 to £10,000 for *Romola* and comparable discussion over the copyrights of her other novels, all of them popular and successful, something more must be noticed other than her need to prove her own worth: there is some distortion of the world around her. What is the meaning of all this in the context of the times—in that second half of the nineteenth century, the golden age of Victorianism, with its new technology, its sweeping industrialization, its population growth, its increasing material wealth, immense social changes, increasing industrial poverty? And in so close a contemporary of Marx (b. 1818) and Engels (b. 1820)?

In the 1870s George Eliot's income was £3,000 to £5,000 or more. In 1865 the Leweses bought The Priory for £2,000, in 1876 a country house for £5,000. Furs, jewelry, their own carriage with its fur rug, large investments in East Indian and American securities, black satin dresses, fashionable hats, and lace mantillas became part of her life; respectability, conservative politics, introductions to royalty, and, for her marriage to Cross (a stockbroker), wedding vows at St. George's, Hanover Square! She was opposed to women's suffrage, preferring to encourage women's education, yet when Emily Davies asked her for help in establishing Girton College, George Eliot could not contribute more than £50. And despite her sympathy, her interest in the rural poor, and her general fund of moral authority, when her old friend and first intellectual mentor, Charles Bray, asked her to help unemployed Coventry ribbon workers, she could spare only £1. Is there another aspect of the emergent self here that should be considered?

It seems impossible that she would not have known this aspect of herself, or why would she have said, "My own books scourge me"? What makes her such a remarkable writer, still compelling today despite so many changes in taste, style, literary purposes, and social morality, is that the novels were not written by this public persona whom she may have deplored quite as much as we do, but by the competent, hard-working, perceptive, intelligent woman of complex thought and experience. Dr. Roberts's discussion of George Eliot's novels is very rewarding, especially with respect to the range of moral attitudes her fiction could test in its "experiments in life," as she called them. The ideas of continuity, of the sanctity of the past, the necessity of conservatism, the relation of individual lives to the general life of the past and custom, the evolution of moral life, the working-out of determinism, the power of sympathy—these and other ideas were to be tested by a set of characters in a given situation not of their making.

When George Eliot is less than satisfactory it is not because these ideas weigh in too heavily, but rather that they are not plumbed deeply enough, the experiment not properly pursued, an intellectual failure translated into an imaginative one. Critics have often commented on the insufficient depth in the conception of, say, Maggie Tulliver or Daniel Deronda, as if they are protected by the novelist's personal indulgence and not adequately grasped by her larger powers of intelligence. Isn't this just how she herself often appeared? Like a character in one of her own novels, she needed the requisite moral cir-

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cumstances to confront, or challenges to call forth her utmost response. Gwendolen Harleth was so confronted; perhaps George Eliot was not.

Worst Years of Their Lives

THE AGE OF SENSATION. *By Herbert Hendin. Norton. $9.95.*

Reviewed by ROSEMARY DINNAGE

If Herbert Hendin has not cornered the market in sociological despair—which would hardly be possible—he seems at least to have been trading in it briskly. After *Suicide and Scandinavia* and *Black Suicide,* he has written a study that might appropriately have been called "Student Suicide." So monotonously bleak are its findings, and so lacking in suggestions for altering the situation it describes, that the reader may find himself pushed into a kind of sullen resistance even where the book's analysis of youthful despair and alienation is most convincing. Dr. Hendin has the psychoanalyst's faith that exposure to facts is in itself enough to bring about change, though he pertinently quotes Freud's own pessimistic question: "What would be the point of the most acute analysis of social neurosis, since no one possesses the power to compel the community to adopt the therapy?" At the end of the exposure, one is numbly distressed and yet wonders whether, in spite of its implicit compassion, the book will not simply be misread as just another stereotyped attack in the war between the generations.

Like Fromm, Erikson, and Kardiner, Dr. Hendin puts society itself under psychoanalytic scrutiny, although he criticizes these writers for their lack of direct observation and illustration. His own research method was loose: individual depth interviews with numbers of young people, backed by psychological tests and written up in terms of general impressions and case histories. Such a form is as dependent as a novel on style and resonance, as we know from the rare successful example of Laing's *The Divided Self.* Of the four hundred New York students the author interviewed, one hundred were specifically involved with drug problems and fifty were seen during the course of a study of attempted suicide; other small groups included homosexuals, impotent male students, and young revolutionaries. With this portion of his sample, it would be easy to accuse Dr. Hendin of sensationalism or pessimism. But he also included one hundred average students, selected at random and paid for their participation, and found that the dense emotional tangles he describes were apparently as common among them as among the rest.

The story, as he tells it, is a monotonously repetitive one of rage, violence, and hate, masked by the deathly unconcern of Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange* and of Vonnegut's Tralfamadorians in *Slaughterhouse-Five.* The female students alternated between dependence and ironclad self-protectiveness—most justifiable, in view of the murderous hatred toward women shown by many of the male students. Over and over again, in the case histories that Dr. Hendin parades, loom the figures of a monstrously cold and angry mother and an ineffectual father in the distant background; these are like figures out of horror films, not ordinary human beings. Bruno Bettelheim's remark, quoted by Dr. Hendin, is an understatement in this context: "Whenever the older generation has lost its bearings, the younger generation is lost with it."

The saddest thing is that among these starving children of affluence, rich in possessions and permissions, so many generous intentions have been mislaid or distorted. A student brought back from attempted suicide had left all his tapes and recording equipment to his mother; only one favorite tape was to be buried with him. Another boy had pestered his father to let him take the car out in a blizzard; the father had not wanted to seem overprotective by refusing, but his son had never forgiven him for letting him risk his life. One of the girls in the study was advised by her boyfriend to get sex wherever she liked while he was in the hospital for a month; obediently she slept with his best friend—and

● ROSEMARY DINNAGE is the author of a series of research monographs on child care. She works as a free-lance editor and reviews for the *Times Literary Supplement* and other English periodicals.

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felt despair afterward. And there was the boy who reported a childhood dream that must be the definitive American nightmare: he had to try to swallow an apple pie as big as a house.

Should we take Dr. Hendin's account with a pinch of salt, or accept his view that "the lives of college students express with eloquence what it means to be alive in America today"? It could be argued that New York students are not representative of a whole culture, that many of his subjects were from deviant groups, and that even those who were not may have given a one-sided account of themselves. Since we are not told in what terms the research project was described to the volunteers, we cannot be sure what they felt would be the appropriate thing to tell a psychoanalytic investigator in return for their fifty dollars. The powerful influence of the researcher on his raw material is well known, and there is something about the sameness of Dr. Hendin's findings that suggests that he tended to see what he wanted to see in order to substantiate his own point of view. And yet there are strong reasons, too, for feeling that his account, even if overstated, contains a distinct vein of truth. Imaginative products cannot be faked. The dreams the students reported and the themes of the contemporary novels Hendin cites dovetail with his argument. The rapid and curious growth of therapy groups devoted to just learning how to see, hear, touch, breathe, and believe that other people exist supports it too. "Awareness," instead of being natural, has to be acquired to meet the emergency, like food parcels directed to a famine-stricken area.

"A life that lacks a sense of connection with feeling, value, and point" is Dr. Hendin's description of contemporary American youth, and he rejects as misleading the picture of a new, free generation as described in books like Charles Reich's *The Greening of America*. The symptoms are fragmentation, the restless search for a casual stimulus that blots out real feeling, and the pressure to become "rapacious consumers of people and dissatisfied customers." The elderly are refuse, the young undermined by being expected to provide salvation for the middle-aged. What Dr. Hendin describes is a society despoiling nature wherever it appears—in the infant, or in the physical world, or in familial affections. It seems inevitable that a "Family" should have emerged from this culture—Charles Manson's—whose function was to tear apart the inseparable mother and fetus.

Analyses of the creeping sickness of the overcivilized half of the world are not exactly new, and Dr. Hendin's contribution in itself is not particularly original or distinguished. But it is compassionate and intermittently acute, and in no way intended as an attack on that specious entity, the "younger generation," whom he sees only as the most vulnerable and visibly wounded in a decadent culture. Whether or not the reporting is biased, his most valuable points are that such damage should not be covered over by an idealization of youth, and that the pressure to grab and gulp, which makes it hard even for the healthy to find a stable way of life, should be unmasked rather than institutionalized.

Apache Territory

PARIS AND ITS PROVINCES, 1792–1802. *By Richard Cobb. Oxford University Press. $17.50.*

Reviewed by FREDERICK BROWN

One year after the Bastille fell, Grégoire, a revolutionary priest celebrated for his dictum that "kings are in the moral realm what monsters are in the natural," sent to correspondents throughout France a questionnaire eliciting information about dialects spoken by the rural folk. Four years later, he submitted a report to the National Convention entitled: "On the Necessity and the Means of Abolishing *Patois* and of Universalizing the Use of the French Language." Whereas beyond the frontiers French had "conquered the esteem of Europe and become classic"—accomplishing by its intrinsic virtue what Rome could never accomplish by force—at home it had to make itself heard above a babel of adversaries. Grégoire proposed to rectify this

FREDERICK BROWN is professor of French at the State University of New York, Stony Brook. He has written a biography of Jean Cocteau, *An Impersonation of Angels*, and, more recently, *Père-Lachaise: Elysium as Real Estate*.

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paradox by creating another: whereas "tyrants" freely learned the language of freedom, free men would have to learn it under duress. Why? "Words are the currency of understanding," he wrote. "If a mind is to acquire new ideas, it needs new terms. . . . Rather than surrender this fabrication to the whims of ignorance, it is surely preferable to give it your language; furthermore, the man of the countryside, being unaccustomed to generalise his ideas, will always lack abstract terms; and this inevitable poverty of language, which straitens the mind, cannot but mutilate your addresses and decrees. . . . It is most especially toward our frontiers that dialects, shared by people on either side, accommodate dangerous conversation with our enemies; but all across our Republic, jargons are barriers impeding the movement of commerce and attenuating social relations."

Grégoire thus formulated in linguistic terms a view held by many Parisians, but especially by those of the Jacobin persuasion, that the provinces lay in ambush, that Paris was an evangelical pale and the countryside outside it a wilderness, a heart concealing dark secrets, an interior scheming with hostile aliens. Today the expression *La Province* speaks of that same view—or, rather, of the bondage in which it has since laid *les provinces,* translating a polymorphous world into a collective, making what is not Paris, Paris's bourgeois mate. Tourists who explore France, blue guide or green guide in hand, are the beneficiaries of a nineteenth-century campaign to chart terra incognita utterly, to subdue it, to think it through and through. The geographical exegesis they will admire was inspired not only by *amour-propre,* perhaps not even by *amour-propre,* but by an imperialist will to rob the countryside of its dread surprises.

Grégoire, who came from the peripheral province of Lorraine, and from peasant stock, knew whereof he spoke. If he had had at his disposal Richard Cobb's latest book, he would have found in it the more reason to quake, or would have acknowledged that the margin between France and enemy territory was but a farther flung replica of the margin between Paris and its *pourtois,* its provincial apron. One step outside meant alienation: facing the neoclassical edifices that served Paris as customhouses, all but encroaching upon these warders of civility, stood a forest still virgin. "The Hottentots, the Sioux, the Iroquois began at the very gates," writes Cobb:

> . . . indeed, on occasion, they might be perceived within them, *le teint basané,* their brilliant white teeth filed down, prowling on the outer fringes of the *foire de Saint-Laurent* and the *marché Saint-Germain,* looking hungrily at little Parisians dressed in nankeen waistcoats and velvet blouses.
>
> In conditions in which Parisian soldiers were frequently stabbed to death, in brawls in rural inns, on the occasion of a christening or a wedding, and after the good name of the regiment had been besmirched by drunken village dancers; in which a soldier from Mantes had been beaten to death in a village quite near, and only just off the highroad on the south bank from Paris to Vernon, *à l'orée du bois,* because quite unwittingly, he had sinned against rural tribal *mores,* by initially refusing to drink out of a glass offered him by a countryman who had already drunk out of it, *selon l'usage de la campagne;* in which a young man of fifteen, thought to have been from a village near Lyon, and who had walked in the company of three soldiers, from Paris, via Pontoise, to Rouen, and thence on the road to Evreux, had been hacked to death by sabre thrusts, so that his face had been rendered unrecognisable . . . by some inhabitants of a village in the Eure, apparently, so far as the judicial inquiry could be made to reveal, because he could not make out what the villagers were trying to say to him (and the *parler normand* would have been incomprehensible to an adolescent from the Lyonnais), there might indeed be something to be said for the Parisian view that most of the inhabitants of the rural periphery were really nothing better than naked savages and cannibals, and that these people were innately nasty, brutal, and bloody.

Paris and Its Provinces, 1792–1802 is itself a blue guide of sorts, a guide not to fixed monuments, or to sites catalogued and assigned some aesthetic or historical *raison d'être*, but to a world in flux. What fascinates Mr. Cobb is that which lies betwixt and between, that which hides, dissolves, eludes definition, changes identity. It is as though, the Revolution having hardened into conceptual landmarks, he would thaw it and, thawing it, revive the fears that beset Paris, the sense of a protean hinterland that stalked and sprang from nowhere. Rarely do we encounter famil-

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iar actors. Cobb eschews center stage for highroads that sped rumor into and out of the city, for woodlands and wetlands that offered refuge to the human predator, for villages that peered at the horizon through medieval slits, for the Seine that infiltrates town and country (like another fugitive), thereby delineating what he himself calls a "map of suspicion," a "geography of mistrust," a "geography of crime," a "geography of theft." Nor do we witness the events that have come to form a scriptural text explicated and then explicated anew by posterity. Cobb deals with lives snuffed out on the road to Versailles or on the Belleville heights; with Appalachian feuds conducted, three kilometers from Notre Dame, between forest warden and poacher; with plots hatched on bridges or in water coaches that plied the river underneath; with organized brigandage in the Flemish border counties where the very earth is a kind of fata morgana, an ambiguous foothold proffered by the sea.

And yet the familiar actors—Robespierre, Danton, Marat, Saint-Just, Grégoire, Hébert—do appear, interlinearly. The book portrays a violent interior, a welter from which they divorced themselves, apotheosizing Virtue and Reason. It records a historical backwash on whose edge they teetered, clinging to their faces. Did they draw parallels between themselves and the dramatis personae of Roman antiquity, yet decree that time should begin with their birth? The rural *Umwelt* that formed them, as the Unconscious forms in its own image the tyrant who represses it, was similarly infant and elder, now agog at a phenomenal surface, now burrowing inside tribal custom. "The man of the countryside," wrote Grégoire, "being unaccustomed to generalise his ideas, will always lack abstract terms; and this inevitable poverty of language . . . cannot but . . . mutilate your decrees."

Cobb brings a remarkably eloquent tongue to this periphery. His accumulation of criminal episodes, his rhapsodic enumeration of place-names conjure up a world both fugitive and landlocked, whose inhabitants lived the more knowledgeably in *terrain* for living outside legal institutions. Since that world could not add its local fractions, intermarry its endogamous sibs, or conceptualize beyond its separate jargons—since it could not, in short,

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transcend itself—accumulation and enumeration constitute what may be called a *style juste*. Here again, however, provinces adumbrated Paris, the Welter implying the One. Revolutionary leaders like Grégoire, Robespierre, Marat, Hébert were as xenophobic as any villager and, in magnifying xenophobia to national dimensions, in generalizing it, did what any villager would have done, given the power. While they resolved to make the countryside totally penetrable (Grégoire complained of "barriers impeding the movement of commerce and attenuating social relations"; toll barriers were in fact among the first institutions to disappear after 1789), they resolved to immure Paris beyond penetration. (That is to say, France. "At the time of the *Fronde* Paris was still nothing more than France's largest city. By 1789 it is already France itself," wrote de Tocqueville.) "It was rather as if the revolutionary authorities of the year II had sought to construct round Paris a sort of Berlin wall," writes Cobb, "not so much to keep the Parisians in, as to prevent those outside from communicating with them." Toward this end did Grégoire crusade for monolingualism.

If no province would harbor a secret or hide from view, once French had exorcised dialects, if *les lumières* would render the remotest hamlet transparent, those dialects were no sooner thought exorcised than seen regrouped as foreign languages threatening to invade the luminous nation, to make it opaque and self-ignorant, to belittle it (rural folk were called *les petits gens*), to destroy its objectivity. The walls round each hamlet thus furnished material for a single wall round France itself. Exorcism *builds* walls—walls as different from the ordinary kind, however, as unanimity from individuality, walls always implying a global wall beyond which there is nothingness, or indeed a wall that disqualifies the very notion and basis of *exchange*. It could be said that that implication determined the course of events leading from 1789 to 1793, from a humanitarian regime to a theocracy, from the Declaration of the Rights of Man to the Terror. In Paris, during year II, exorcism became government itself, abolishing *les provinces* only to create *La Province*, making an absolute Enclave of enclaves laid bare, and a universal *patois* of tongues ripped out. In the guillotine's severing edge, it found its consummately appropriate symbol.

Where Parisian radicals sought to homogenize France, to abstract and generalize, their marginal enemy is seen ducking in and out of rational networks, gliding clandestinely underneath administrative grids superimposed upon the land, eluding lines of definition. Paris and its alien Self played hide-and-seek—for mortal stakes. Had not the revolutionary government parceled the capital into forty-eight sections, each governed by a commissioner? Fugitives turned this Cartesian model to their advantage: "The *commissaire*, like the *juge de paix*, liked to be undisturbed in the exercise of his functions. If one were either a resident or a lodger in a given Section, it was often enough, even in the conditions of the Terror, to cross the river in order to begin afresh with a judicial life at least temporarily virgin."

Paris could not seal itself tightly enough to prevent osmotic exchange between inside and outside. During the Terror, the military commandant of Belleville would report that "about 110 ex-nobles or foreigners have withdrawn to the canton of Belleville; some have even taken up residence a stone's throw from the walls [Paris's] and—chiefly the women—promenade along the exterior boulevard freely communicating with citizens on the other side." If women engaged in secret conversation at the near frontier, at the far a Jewish gang foraging between Holland and the Belgian departments of France spoke Yiddish. "According to Dinah Jacob," writes Cobb, referring to the Jezebel who betrayed them, "when members of her husband's group were in need of a passport or a certificate, or wanted to change their at best elusive names, as they frequently did, 'her mother would fabricate passports and certificates for them, possessing the skill to counterfeit signatures and handwritings.' "

Whatever moved in this hinterland, which Paris sought to contain, to illuminate, to channel and define, moved under cover or metamorphosed as it moved, hiding or changing identity. (Not only words, but wine—habitually watered at source, then again during its journey through Grenelle and Vaugirard, Parisian table wine, *vin de Paris*—would enter Paris more a product of

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the road than of the vineyard.) One understands why Cobb should have made the Seine River a heroine of this book. Extending its arms Siva-like to every corner of the *pourtois,* it symbolized for Parisians the *pourtois'* uncontainability, the rural disinherited who might at any moment rise against them: ". . . river ports like Vernon, Mantes, Meulan, Pontoise, Beaumont, Pont-Sainte-Maxence, Bray, Montereau, Moret, Chauny, Meaux, Lagny, Epernay, La Fère, Soissons, and nearer still, Gennevilliers, Argenteuil, and Saint-Germain, occupied a permanent place in the demonology of the Parisian, as he anxiously scrutinized the *mercuriales* or the height of his river."

As *Paris and Its Provinces* travels centrifugally from Paris's perimeter to France's Belgian flank (Cobb would have it that the annexation of Belgian departments in 1795 made Paris a border capital, fusing both margins of its *pourtois* and setting a literal foreigner outside its gates), ambiguity enfolds the subject completely, like fog rolling in from the North Sea. Borders themselves become fugitive, their judicial virginity certified by the treaty that shifted them northeast to a land of coves, swamps, and estuary islands where nothing could gain purchase. Fugitives in turn become Jews, representing a double negation of national identity, a consummate Outside. And finally, the archival source on the basis of which Cobb would reconstitute *la bande juive* (a multifarious brotherhood, reaching from Rhenish towns clear across Flanders into Paris, that calls to mind Balzac's Underground Nation), the legal deposition over which he lucubrates, is a tale told by a mythomaniac. Would he have examined it at such length and in such detail, bringing to bear his immense erudition, had it not illustrated the borderline of which every other in the book is a paradigmatic version—the borderline between historiography and fiction?

Cobb pursues Dinah Jacob through the misty environment that is her mind rather as the faun of *L'Après-midi* pursues a nymph neither real nor illusory, trying to grasp the flesh of it all. Indeed, wherever there is a perimeter in *Paris and Its Provinces,* just beyond it, facing the sentry and beckoning him to leave his watch, is Woman. "After all, a wood would offer a jungle of rural indiscipline and collective anarchy, a temporary haven to the bandit and to the lonely wild man, as well as in spring and summer a temptation to the rapist, to the sexual violence of the forest, a bower, too, of physical love among ling and fern." "The *coches* [Seine water coaches] were also favoured by the humbler sort of seducer, who used the long slow hours of the journey *en aval* to prepare the terrain for the exercise of his verbal and physical talents on arrival in the metropolis. But he might equally fall victim to the apparent naïveté of young girls from the Morvan and the Avallonnais who were seeking to exercise *their* talents on a more promising and varied clientele, after having gained their first experience in the provinces." "Les Porcherons, Clichy, Ménilmontant, Saint-Cloud, Meudon, Joinville, Antony, Asnières were also the sort of places to which the Parisian male, whether artisan or bourgeois . . . might take a girl, whom he was anxious to impress, inebriate, and so seduce on a Sunday or a Monday outing . . . either in a *guinguette* or in some riverside or wayside inn. . . ."

In divagations such as these, Cobb seems to betray a view akin to that of urban revolutionaries. The provinces constituted a matrix, a motherland that the Revolution proposed to supplant with a fatherland or *patrie* (hence *les enfants de la patrie:* men-begotten children of self-made men). Likewise, *patois* being mother tongues, or *mère-langues,* eighteenth-century grammarians, to justify their extirpation, elaborated the myth that Gauls spoke Celtic, a "masculine" language of northern origin. Cobb's quest for historical quiddity, for a "beyond" that names can never make sufficiently graspable, brings to mind Michelet's mid-nineteenth-century lament: "I was born of the Folk, I have the Folk in my heart, but its language . . . its language is inaccessible to me."

Paris and Its Provinces, then, is very like a dramatic confrontation involving, on every level, the sleuth and an ultimately mysterious *féminin,* the shaper (whether of cities, of nations, or of narratives) and an amorphous, contradictory element, the Outside and the Inside. Place-names serve to orient that brute and fluid country lying round about Paris, to compass it, to make it geographical (and historical). Yet intoned as they often are by the

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author, they themselves become mobile, rushing after one another deliriously, as though called, like maenads, into the forest, or caught in a current of the river. Cobb clearly loves their sound, their concreteness, their profusion. If *Paris and Its Provinces* may be said to consider French society at a moment that polarized it, or that brought into focus the polarity of its nature, in so doing it anticipates the bloody civil war of 1871. One can only be grateful to the novelist *manqué* who drove Mr. Cobb underground into archives and then, at the far side of his prodigious labor, saved his vision. His is a book brilliantly conceived and written, which goes to the quick of modern France.

Newszak

THE TIN KAZOO. Television, Politics and the News. *By Edwin Diamond. M.I.T. $8.95.*

Reviewed by ROBERT G. HAZO

It is altogether appropriate that in America, the land of the ephemeral, watching television has become the single most time-consuming passivity next to sleep. It is also altogether understandable that, in what Al Smith called "the ten-day country," the visual medium has been quickly and generally conceded to be the most potent shaper of national habits.

At the inception of media politics in 1960, Theodore White called television's power "primordial." Marshall McLuhan, shortly thereafter, did not pause for qualification in announcing the triumph of manner over matter on the tube: the medium, one will recall, was the message. More recently, as Robert Hutchins proclaimed, "Television is making us what we are." Reflecting gloomily on the social wreckage of the 1960s, George Ball sees all that incredible turmoil as "little more than the passing whims and quirks of a generation made excessively suggestible by visual communications that intensify the transient and the faddish." One of the networks' most stern critics, Patrick Buchanan, did not think he was indulging in hyperbole when he said, "If a picture is worth a thousand words, then a film strip is worth a thousand pictures." And Irving Kristol offers a grudging salute to the power of the visual medium in claiming, "Television is the greatest disaster that journalism has ever experienced. . . ."

After Richard Nixon's "Checkers Speech," the rise and fall of Charles Van Doren, the Kennedy-Nixon debates, the demise of Senator Muskie after the New Hampshire primary, the fall of President Johnson, the 1968 Democratic convention in Chicago, the ending of the Vietnam War, and the Watergate hearings—the raw power of television to make or break men and determine events seems unquestionable. In politics and business, it has long been axiomatic that visibility has the same potential as fire and must therefore be treated with the same caution and kept under the same kind of control. Of major political figures today only Mayor Daley (who once said that "there is nothing lower than a newspaper") seems unaffected by the media. The others view public relations, filtered through the media, as the principal road to personal or corporate success, and thus implicitly acknowledge the extravagant claims made for media power.

Edwin Diamond, the author of this slender volume and himself a journalist, asks us to look beyond the conventional wisdom about the impact of TV, and urges us to refine and extend our admittedly grossly limited understanding of the effects of mass communications. He prods us to examine carefully the question of what is likely to happen in the next phase of media history. The result is a modest but solid volume. Since the aridity of most writing about television is of Saharan proportions, coming across a serious book of this kind is an unexpected pleasure.

Diamond notes the impressive statistics on American television watching (seventy-five million viewers on any given night) but begins his inquiry about the kind of power television wields by reminding us that these gross data alone do not justify any easy or extravagant conclusions.

The fact that vast numbers watch television night after night tells little about their reasons for watching, the level of their expectations, the content

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of the messages conveyed, and the degree of change—if any—that may take place in attitudes and behavior as a result of viewing.

His point of departure for suggesting that exposure may not automatically, or possibly even often, translate into serious effect is to underline the gross public dissatisfaction with the offerings of television. The audience is predictably large but a substantial and growing segment of it is consistently unenthusiastic, or at best willing to admit to only a passive interest in what they watch. This finding may be of only transient significance if it is understood as a function of the current widespread disenchantment with all social institutions in America. But Diamond sees in it the strong possibility that a media threshold has been passed and that, as a result, claims about the potency of television in influencing behavior are already subject to major qualification.

Television as a cultural development, Diamond reminds us, has passed beyond the point of a compelling novelty, and thus no longer receives the quality of attention devoted to a new and dramatic technology. Like plumbing, the electric light, central heating, and the telephone, it has become just one more household utility—taken for granted and missed largely in its absence. Media saturation has begun to take its toll. The dimensions of the growing information business (as outlined, for example, by Kevin Phillips in his recent book *Mediacracy*) are reflected in the enormous number of signals competing for audience attention. In a society suffused by media assaults, we viewers, listeners, and readers must either shut them out or succumb to habits of passivity and inertia in order to preserve a tolerable level of equilibrium. A few selective members of the audience do manage to control their diet of television, although the vast bulk consume it indiscriminately.

One of Diamond's main contentions about audience receptivity to the influence of television is that indiscriminate viewers are difficult, indeed often impossible, to affect because of their low receptivity. Video-tranquilized into torpor, television's strident appeals are relegated to the penumbra of their consciousness. In an ambiance wherein al-

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most everything is presented as sensational, little is retained as significant. In fact, it turns out that very little of anything is retained. Studies made to measure viewer retention demonstrate that, whatever else the fare offered on television is, it is clearly not memorable.

It is also, according to Diamond, not educational. Nor was it ever intended to be. Television (like radio) was originally conceived as a device for marketing products, with public affairs programming added as an afterthought. The presentation of news, therefore, must be seen in a commercial context. Networks are profit-making corporations pervaded by economic values and imperatives. Their news services are not exempted from these considerations. What Diamond calls the growing sophistication of the viewing audience probably amounts to nothing more than the realization that network news aims at ratings and profit, with all other goals subordinated to these commercial ones. Although television news is still given a higher credibility quotient than radio or the printed media, its loss of credibility has doubled in the last ten years. One would like to think that this trend is a result of the meager fare offered by the networks. The specialist, the open-minded, the committed, and, to an increasing extent, even the passive viewer, are, according to Diamond, unsatisfied by "Newszak." Since gullibility is spurred by the strong desire to be reassured, to accept almost anything that can make the unknown less strange by rendering experience more coherent, the emergence of sizable viewer skepticism is a very hopeful sign.

What this sign suggests is that the limitations of television public affairs programming are finally becoming explicit. It is no longer possible for a network to advertise its news service by showing a picture of its anchorman over a caption, "All you need to know." Now network spokesmen claim only to be offering a headline service, a verbal-visual sample or, at best, an outline of the day's events. Even this modest claim is compromised by the reluctant acknowledgment by media spokesmen that the attention getting, whatever its importance, is featured over the informational as a matter of routine. Television, it seems, is slowly becoming less pretentious in order to cut its losses and retain whatever influence it still has on public affairs. That influence continues to be substantial, but Diamond's thesis, supported by compelling examples, that it is diminishing and is likely to continue to do so has the ring of truth.

The thesis applies primarily to the effort to persuade on specific issues and problems in the area of public affairs where the ostensible appeal is to the critical and rational faculties. More and more, advocacy of this kind is perceived as controversial—dubious or biased—and therefore it runs into resistance. But, except for the jaded, no comparable barrier arises to filter the influence that flows from the screen to the audience in such matters as dress, manners, taste, and, above all, language. Here, where influence occurs because of subliminal conditioning, one would expect the effect of television to be the greatest because it is diffuse, insidious, unfocused, and mostly unperceived. It is also an influence that is largely a function of form rather than substance, of presentation and repetition rather than evidence and argument—manipulation of the sort that results in acquiescence rather than agreement. It is, in short, the kind of influence that is built into the potentialities of the medium itself.

It is one thing to exploit those potentialities to gain attention for entertainment programming, but quite another to use them for maximum impact in news and public affairs programming. For the latter purports to deal with events, and many events do not comfortably fit the imperatives of media formats, or competition between networks. Many such events, however important, are not inherently dramatic. Often they are too complex to lend themselves to explanations delivered in two minutes or less. They are frequently not atypical, unique, or bizarre; and the most important of them are seldom new. The presentation of events within the bounds of media formats results in a radical disjunction between the truncated accounts presented on television and the reality of life itself. Mr. Diamond claims that, after more than a quarter of a century, this disjunction is being understood by a significant number of viewers, for whom the complexities of reality are beginning to reassert themselves. If he is right, it is a noteworthy development.

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—EDITOR

The Night Watchman State

In his review of Robert Nozick's *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (Winter 1975/76) George Kateb errs on several important issues. Of these I'll mention only three.

Firstly, the claim is made that Nozick's arguments, which Kateb admits to be "strong and effective" against economic egalitarianism, are directed against a straw man, since the true rationale behind liberal social programs is not economic equality, but the alleviation of misery. But if this is the true liberal rationale then Nozick's libertarianism is thereby *easier* to defend, not harder. For if the object of the liberals has been, not equality, but the alleviation of poverty and "the misery of millions," then the defense of laissez-faire moves out of the realm of ethics and political philosophy and into that of economics. Here Nozick is no longer a lone knight but is joined by an army of economists who have argued both from the theory of the marketplace and from the historical evidence that the liberal end is most effectively achieved by the libertarian means. So Adam Smith argued 200 years ago in the *Wealth of Nations*. So Nobel Prize-winning economist Hayek argues today. Even within the Democratic party, that traveling medicine show renowned for peddling government as the universal elixir, doubt is being expressed. The old medicine has been tried and it doesn't work. Listen to Jerry Brown, Dan Walker, or Michael Dukakis. Read Ed Muskie's speech to the Liberal party of New York. Examine the pages of *Commentary* and the *Public Interest*. If, as Kateb claims, Nozick had been looking for an easy target he would have found it, not in the ethics of egalitarianism, but in the economics of the welfare state.

Secondly, Kateb claims that "the night watchman state can be a police state." In ordinary usage "police state" refers to a state possessing vast powers to interfere with the freedom and lifestyles of citizens. Given this ordinary interpretation, Kateb's claim is absurd. Nozick's night watchman state is limited to the functions of protection against force and fraud and is therefore the antipode of a police state. It is true that this limitation of functions does not by itself imply that a certain *form* of government is better than another. Here it would be necessary to determine which form is most likely to remain limited to the proper functions and which form is least costly given the historical circumstances of the actual concrete community being considered. Even after these considerations are dealt with there may remain a range of forms compatible with the functions of the moral state. But there is no reason for alarm in *this*. Fortunately we are more advanced than the ass who starved because he could not decide which of two equally nourishing bales of hay to eat.

Finally, Kateb asserts that "the telos of the minimal state is the tribal society." Here Kateb has failed to understand that what Nozick seeks in a political system is not a particular social result but rather a framework in which men may freely choose their own social arrangement. Thus it is true that a man in the night watchman state could live a primitive tribal existence if he so chose. But this certainly does not imply that Nozick himself would recommend that way of life. In fact Nozick proposes that "a person's shaping his life in accordance with some overall plan is his way of giving meaning to his life." As it stands this is admittedly somewhat vague, but to me at least it suggests not the accident-fraught stagnation of tribal existence, but rather a life of growth and creativity in a developed society.

ARTHUR M. DIAMOND, JR.
Chicago, Illinois

MR. KATEB replies: I appreciate Mr. Diamond's attention but find that his three points leave me unpersuaded.

On the first point, Mr. Diamond seems not to want to deal with Nozick's principal contention, which is that welfarist policies (in the most inclusive sense) are *immoral*, not that they are ineffective and perhaps even self-defeating. References to present-day anxieties about social programs would matter in this context only if the case could be made that, apart from the moral claims involved,

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any kind of state intervention, in any degree, for any social purpose, must turn out to be entirely worthless. If that could be shown then we could say, on that basis alone, that it would be immoral to intervene. No one is foolish enough to say that or anything more or less like that. Granted, then, a modicum of belief in efficacy, the next question is and must be: What are the moral claims involved? I believe—and here I follow almost every moral philosopher who has ever addressed himself to the issue between Nozick and myself—that a person is obliged to relieve the misery of another if he can do so without seriously hurting himself. I also believe that this is one in that class of obligations, strict obligations, that the state (following proper procedure) may compel us all to perform when not enough of us perform them freely. The relief of misery is like abstaining from murder, theft, arson, rape, and fraud in its moral significance, even though all the latter are obligations met by free or intimidated abstention while relief of misery requires a positive act and is achieved when it is achieved, as an enactment of social policy and not usually as the resultant of "the criminal sanction." A man's rights are not abridged when the law requires him to meet a strict obligation. Nozick has made a moral mistake; and Mr. Diamond's proposed rebuttal of my argument does not save Nozick from his mistake.

Mr. Diamond's second point is also an evasion. He does not see that a limited purpose may require an immense commitment. Imagine a society in which a few are rich and most are poor and feel neglected or exploited. They resent their condition and want to change it. Even if they are wrong to think so, they think that justice is on their side. Their sense of grievance energizes them into dissidence and then episodic revolutionary action. The few, dominant in the state, mobilize it to protect themselves. The few feel surrounded and outnumbered and therefore introduce all sorts of defensive measures: relocating populations, strict curfew, constant police surveillance, police infiltration, the use of provocative agents. A state of seige may be declared; society placed on a war footing; social and economic controls imposed; privacy constantly invaded; civil liberties placed at the mercy of boards of censors and inquisitors; the rule of law suspended; discretionary state action of every kind justified by reference to "necessity" or "emergency" or "survival." There is nothing farfetched in this example. In real life, pure laissez-faire is rare; but systematic indifference to suffering is not, and it may be joined to systematic repression. Let us keep to mind Milton Friedman's disgraceful adventures in Pinochet's Chile. Of course the night watchman state can be a police state. If you love your property enough, and love very little besides, certain circumstances must lead you to a huge repressive apparatus. Nozick's failure to see this is a part of his general lack of political understanding—a lack which also shows itself in his likening of democracy to mutual enslavement, and his frivolous talk about the moral value of taking part in decisions that affect your life.

In making his third point, Mr. Diamond misunderstands the way I am using the word "tribal." I do not mean primitive; I mean any life characterized by smallness, tightness, human similarity, conformity, enclosure, and so on. It is a purified life without sharp contrasts and unexpected occurrences; in it, a person's identity is exclusively defined by a continuous monopolizing membership. The antithesis to the tribal life espoused by Nozick is the life of the free individual in a constitutional democracy. In present conditions, such a life is gravely threatened by the swollen state we have, but it could not be guaranteed by a return to a minimal state. The aim must be to reduce the state's irrational excesses.

Poetry and the American Public

I read Samuel Hazo's "Poetry and the American Public" (Spring 1976) with a great deal of interest. Having helped to inaugurate the poetry series at the University of Georgia, I have a certain stock in the American poetry market in addition to my work on the *Sewanee Review*.

Let me add a postscript to Mr. Hazo's fine article. The *Sewanee Review* now devotes a dozen pages of each issue to publishing new poetry, and it contains two poetry chronicles each year as well as shorter reviews. Paul Ramsey writes an annual essay-review on common tendencies in the poetry of the preceding year. For this article he considers 50-100 collections, and about two dozen are reviewed. Calvin Bedient is writing a different kind of article: he surveys the latest work of established poets. In the spring 1976 issue he criticizes John Ashbery, Louise Glück, David Ignatow, and Philip Levine. I don't believe that Mr. Hazo would deem either of these regular articles a simple chronicle of new books that is "notice" rather than criticism.

Some of the poets published in the *Sewanee Review* during the past two years are A. R. Ammons, James Applewhite, Ben Belitt, Hayden Carruth, Peter Cooley, Malcolm Cowley, Jean Farley, Roy Fuller, James Baker Hall, Seamus Heaney, Jean Hollander, Thomas Kinsella, Jahanta Mahapatra, Frederick Morgan, Richard Murphy, Howard Nemerov, Paul Smyth, Dabney Stuart, Barry Spacks, Lewis Turco, John Unterecker, and Robert Penn Warren.

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I know of no general literary quarterly that devotes as much attention to contemporary poetry.

GEORGE CORE, Editor
The Sewanee Review

MR. HAZO replies: I truly regret my omission of the *Sewanee Review* from more selective treatment. The journal is certainly among the best in the country and has been for years, both in terms of reviews and the publishing of poems. I hope this tardy and separate mention compensates for my inexcusable but inadvertent neglect in the article, and I congratulate Mr. Core on his excellent work there as well as at the University of Georgia. We need more like him.

* * *

It is obvious that the oral tradition in poetry far antedates the written, but Samuel Hazo's contention in "Poetry and the American Public" that reading poems aloud is "the culmination of the poetic art" is insupportable. The argument that what was once of primary importance must needs continue to be so is really too feeble to require refutation, though it might be of interest to the queen of England if that lady had any political ambitions. One could as validly insist that poets continue to use rhyme and regular meter as that they confine themselves to writing in a style amenable to "the auditory nature of poetry."

With regard, then, to the auditory and the nonauditory as they exist in modern literature, it would be analogous to Mr. Hazo's position to attempt to maintain that dialogue in the novel is nothing more than an unconsummated version of dramatic script. Granted that there are similarities between the two, that words spoken by characters in a novel must have somewhat a dramatic quality (just as poems on the printed page retain somewhat an oral quality), such a hypothesis would let slip the fact that the novelist has at hand a spectrum of devices for showing character and inflection, varying pace, providing contrast, and pointing up symbolic implication, that is denied the playwright, as has the playwright a spectrum denied the novelist. The two types of writing are simply different, although both appear initially couched on the printed page and both indicate words spoken by (fictional) people.

In the same way, poetry can be and is being written which relies for its effectiveness on a spectrum of devices, including nonstandard punctuation, the visual arrangement of words on the page, and artful deviation from the customary considerations of semantics and syntax, none of which could even remotely be approximated in a reading aloud without hopelessly alienating whatever tiny coterie had been induced to come and listen.

I am neither indifferent nor opposed to the bardic tradition, which has produced and continues to produce a great deal of magnificently evocative poetry. But I am adamantly opposed to the idea that reading aloud is "by definition essential to the appreciation of the poem." To accept this idea would be certainly to misunderstand and perhaps implicitly to belittle some of the most innovative, intriguing, and invigorating poetry being written today.

JAMES DOUGLAS AIKIN
Los Gatos, California

MR. HAZO replies: James Aikin has raised a point on which reasonable men can differ. There is no doubt that poems have been written that rely on typography for their effect. Cummings, a superb poet, is a good example. Concrete poetry is less good, but it will serve. The problem here is that effects of typography, like rhyme, are necessarily restricted (and retrict the poem) to the poet's native tongue. They are untranslatable. That is their strength and their limitation. Spoken poems somehow transcend this and move closer to that universality (occasionally even prior to translation) that is at poetry's very core. For that reason I reassert my conviction that "the proper destiny of a poem is to be heard, or at least to be read as if it were being heard." I have no objections to experimentation for the eye, but it carries with it its own hermetic risk. Even poets who relied on visual effects realized this. Cummings gave readings.

The Media Shangri-La

"All in all, the idea of information has been reduced to the attitudes of modern literalism." How in the world did that sentence get printed in THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR? Can one believe that you could have been so naïve as not to see the relevance to your rag? Or are you simply demonstrating Tyrmand's point in "The Media Shangri-La" (Winter 1975/76) that an Op-Ed article can be allowed to flicker in the void, innocuously, provided only that no dialogue is generated?

Perhaps one is to imagine that yours is not a medium of information, but one of reflection, and that your liberal, college-educated clientele would be unhappy reading a defense of the CIA or of Wallace's candidacy. "Now scientists can't speak up at Harvard and Yale if their findings do not bow to the intellectual terror." Can these same find an outlet in your publication? Under the guise of either information of reflection?

I see you have, over the course of the years, dropped your "Man Thinking" quotation from Emerson. Might I suggest you also modify your

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masthead from "Independent Thinker" to something like "Liberal Elite"?

G. M. Foglesong
Livermore, California

* * *

Noting that all of the printed comments concerning Mr. Tyrmand's "The Media Shangri-La" were hostile in nature, the following supportive note is offered:

As one who firmly believes the visual and written press has long been engaged in purposeful liberal mind-conditioning; as one who believes the press puts its own vested interests even before human life; as one who shudders at the bile and venom in the eyes and words of those prime time dispensers of Truth as they destroy under the guise of "freedom of expression"; and as one who has absolutely no trouble whatsoever in understanding what Mr. Tyrmand is saying, I say *Hooray!*

Donald A. Haney
The University of South Florida
Tampa, Florida

Incidental Meditations

I feel that I cannot let Aristides' "Incidental Meditations" (Spring 1976) go by me without challenging much that he says. It may be that the only idea with which I agree is his fantasy, at the end, of Freud's reaction to EST and sex surrogates. And he didn't even mention nude encounter groups. But then, what would J. S. Bach think if he were to return to hear some of our contemporary music, including singing commercials?

My biggest quarrel with Aristides is that he takes Freud apart, but then ventures no further into the progression of ideas that followed. It's like saying that the field of medicine went no further than Hippocrates, or philosophy ended with Plato. Has Aristides not heard of Harry Stack Sullivan and Frieda Fromm-Reichmann? Of Erik Erikson? What about R. D. Laing? Or those working in the area of family systems, such as Jay Haley, Don Jackson, and Paul Watzlawick? Not even Eric Berne? He does not even mention some of the more popular writers (for the layman) such as Karen Horney, Theodor Reik, and Erich Fromm. Where has he been?

Aristides makes the statement that "people feel themselves sinking under the weight of their problems and life seems generally less good." Was it ever? Who has had the "good life"? In novels, journals, and actual history, even in just the last century, does anyone talk about having a good life? Life has been a struggle down the centuries. Now we are saying, "I want something better." This is bad?

Then Aristides talks about the therapeutic mode of perceiving the world—that what is most significant in life is played out in the interior, in the mind; that it is a play with a cast of one: oneself. Not true, dear Aristides. We exist in relation. Our turmoils, crises, and struggles always involve, whether in their genesis, manifestation, or resolution, another person. The meat and core of therapy is the relation, the transference, the countertransference. It is a struggle of two people, not one. Freud couldn't quite talk about stuff like that, but many others have. Read Harold Searles. Carl Whitaker. Otto Kernberg. Aristides can talk about Oedipus complex, identity crisis, or impotency until he is blue in the face, and accomplish nothing if it is not in the context of the interpersonal, the other.

And what about will and imagination, Aristides' most important element in life? What does distinguish those who have it from those who don't? Genetics? Astrology? Is that where he comes from? The trouble with him is that he writes about something he knows nothing about, except from TV or the mass "how to" books that he decries. I suggest he *really* find out what it's all about.

Paul Stein
San Rafael, California

* * *

Aristides is probably right in suspecting the authenticity of his anecdote about the psychoanalyst telling the sculptor he needed money and a woman ("Incidental Meditations"). It bears a striking resemblance to a probably more authentic one told of Dr. S. Weir Mitchell, 1829-1914. To a friend Mitchell remarked about two of his psychiatric patients: "If I could find a million dollars for that young man, and a husband for that lady, they would be cured."

That was the same Dr. Mitchell who got a recalcitrant patient out of bed by threatening to get in with her, and treated a lady who refused to exercise by taking her for a drive in the country and ejecting her from his buggy some distance from her home. I suspect that Aristides would have preferred Dr. Mitchell's therapy to that of a modern psychiatrist. The testimony of scores of patients, many of them prominent people, suggests that Mitchell worked at least as many cures as present-day practitioners.

Ernest Earnest
Gladwyne, Pennsylvania

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